AUSTRALIAN MUSLIM LEADERS, NORMALISATION AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT

Functionalism has been the dominant framework for the explanation of social integration. Policies for the integration of migrants in the West have mainly centred on the improvement of migrants’ socio-economic situation (employment, education and income). Nonetheless, for Muslim minorities in the West, including Australia, the functionalist conception of integration is inadequate. Although Muslim minorities are socio-economically disadvantaged, they are also subject to social exclusion based on their religion and culture. This is due to a longstanding historical ideological construction of Islam as stagnant, pre-modern, despotic, patriarchal and violent, in opposition to the progressive, modern, democratic, egalitarian and civilised West. This is to say that Muslims have been placed outside the space of ‘normal’ in western discourses. Muslims will not be able to fully integrate into Australian society unless their derogatory image changes.

This study aims to explore the issue of social integration from the perspective of Australian Muslim leaders. It is argued that social integration can be defined as a process of normalisation. ‘Integrationist’ Muslim leaders struggle to normalise the image of Muslims and Islam in the Australian public sphere. Their efforts have both organisational and discursive aspects. This process of normalisation, however, is contested from both within and without. From within, there are Muslim ‘radicals’ and ‘isolationists’ who challenge the normalisation process. From without, the media’s disproportionate focus on provocative and radical Muslim voices challenges the integrationist leaders’ efforts.

This thesis purports to reveal the dynamics and struggles within the Australian Muslim leadership field regarding the normalisation of Islam and Muslims’ images in Australia. The evidence comes from 30 in-depth interviews conducted with Muslim leaders in Melbourne and Sydney.
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Finally, I thank Dr Jillian Graham for her proofreading and copyediting efforts.
DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award to a candidate of any other degree or diploma, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis. To the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

The thesis has been copy-edited and proof-read by Dr Jillian Graham whose services are consistent with those outlined in Section D of the Australian Standards for Editing Practice (ASEP). Dr Graham’s own fields of study encompass Musicology, Social History, Women’s Studies and Psychoanalysis.

Signed  _______________
Date     _______________
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study contributes to the extant literature on the social integration of Australian Muslims into wider society. The issue of social integration is widely debated within policy and academic circles; nonetheless, a consensus has not been reached regarding an appropriate definition for social integration in an ethnically diverse society. Governments, minority advocacy groups, non-government organisations (NGOs) and scholars offer separate frameworks vis-à-vis social integration. This study focuses on Muslim leaders’ perspectives to explore how they understand the issue of social integration. In this first chapter, I outline the research problem, design, scope, and theoretical framework of the study.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Muslim settlement in Australia pre-dates White settlement. Macassan fishermen, from Indonesia, were the first to arrive in the northern and western coasts of Australia to trade with Aboriginals (Cleland 2001). However, mass migration of Muslims to Australia began seriously in the 1970s, with Lebanese and Turkish people being the first groups to arrive. Since then, Muslims from over 60 countries have settled in Australia, though they still comprise only a small percentage of the population. At the time of the 2011 census, the Muslim population was 476,300, accounting for a mere 2.2 per cent of the whole population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012a).

Despite their small numbers, Australian Muslims have been widely discussed in media and political forums, particularly following the terrorist attacks of September 11 in the United States of America. Terrorism, fundamentalism, violence, misogyny, the burqa and refugees have been key issues raised in relation to Australian Muslims, who have often been described negatively in these debates (Akbarzadeh & Smith 2005; Brasted 2001; Poynting et al. 2004; Humphrey 2007; Kabir 2004; Manning 2006; Poynting, Noble & Tabar 2004; Rane, Ewart & Abdalla 2010; Sohrabi & Farquharson 2012; Yasmeen 2010). A bipartisan federal parliamentary inquiry regarding the acceptance of cultural diversity in Australia
reported that ‘the largest issue facing the nation is the acceptance of Muslims, who many Australians fear have an agenda not at one with the country's values’ (Karvelas 2012). Similarly, in a national survey on Australians’ attitudes towards racism and multiculturalism conducted over 10 years by the University of Western Sydney, almost half the respondents reported anti-Muslim sentiments (Dunn et al. 2008). These examples indicate that a large number of Australians do not hold positive attitudes towards Muslims.

Does this mean that Muslims have not been well integrated into Australian society? There is no straightforward response to this question. The answer of course depends on how the concept of social integration is defined. Policy makers, sociologists, and minority activists offer varied definitions of the term and utilise different indicators to measure it. In addition, other closely-related concepts such as ‘social inclusion’ and ‘social cohesion’ are often used interchangeably with ‘social integration’.

The issue of social integration of immigrants in general and Muslims in particular has been covered under several Australian government policies. The National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security (Ministerial Council on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2006), developed by the Howard government, provides an example of the singling out of Muslims. As well, media discourses often depict Muslims as people who are unwilling or incapable of integration. It is claimed that Muslims’ culture and religion are not compatible with Australian values and the Australian way of life (e.g. Kabir 2006; Brasted 2001; Rane, Ewart & Abdalla 2010). In contrast, several studies reflect the views of Australian Muslims who believe they are integrated, and who do not see a serious clash between their religion and Australian values. They assert that Islam has not been represented accurately in media and political discourses (e.g. Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2007; IDA 2007).

The inconsistencies displayed in the views outlined above can be partly explained by the current vague definition of social integration. It is this area that this study aims to explore from the perspective of Muslim leaders. In particular, the following questions are asked:

1- How is the notion of social integration understood and explained by Australian Muslim leaders? How do Muslim leaders differ in their views?
2- What factors do Muslim leaders view as being important in facilitating or impeding the social integration of Muslims?

3- What strategies are evoked by Australian Muslim leaders to enhance social integration, if any?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND SCOPE

A qualitative research method is employed here. Qualitative methods are adopted where the researcher seeks to obtain an in-depth and nuanced understanding of a subject (Miles & Huberman 1994). These methods are particularly appropriate for a study that aims to enhance the theoretical understanding of the subject (Strauss & Corbin 1990). The research questions above tap into various aspects of social integration from the perspective of Australian Muslim leaders, and this complex concept lends itself well to qualitative inquiry. Moreover, the study aims to contribute to theoretical knowledge about social integration. The nature of the research questions and the purpose of the study together necessitate the adoption of a qualitative method.

In-depth interviewing was the primary research tool for this study. Thirty Muslim leaders were interviewed in Melbourne and Sydney in 2010 and 2011, with maximum diversity sought to incorporate a wide range of opinions. The definition of leadership proved to be a very important methodological issue in the course of the sampling. According to social identity theory, leaders of a group are those who are able to set the definition for shared identity. In other words, leaders are ‘entrepreneurs of identity’ (Reicher, Haslam & Hopkins 2005). The question of leadership is often contested as members of a group struggle to promote their interpretation of shared identity. This is certainly the case within Australian Muslim communities, where many individuals and groups compete to establish their view of the role and meaning of Islam in Australia.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND ARGUMENT
This thesis proffers a new conceptual framework for the explanation of social integration in relation to migrants and ethnic groups. This framework was developed from the perspective of leadership among Muslim minorities. Social integration is often framed as socio-economic integration in state policies, which is deeply bound up with functionalist theory. With regard to social integration, states often guide their policies towards the improvement of employment opportunities and better access to social services, education, healthcare and housing (O’Brien & Penna 2006; Ager & Strang 2008; Castles et al. 2001). However, the literature on the role of non-material aspects of social integration is growing. The literature of multiculturalism and the politics of recognition view culture as a system of stratification in modern societies and a possible source of social conflict (Fraser 1995; Honneth 1996; Taylor 1992).

In line with this literature, this study highlights the non-material aspects of social integration and examines the role of recognition in relation to social integration. Evidence from in-depth interviews with Australian Muslim leaders shows that they assign an important role to the recognition of their identity and religion in the process of social integration. One of the most frequent themes that emerges in almost every single study on Muslims, including this one, is their dissatisfaction with the media’s representations of Islam and Muslims. Muslims are extremely concerned about the ways in which they are portrayed in the media. They believe the media paint a distorted image of them through the disproportionate coverage of Islamic extremism, violence, and so forth.

This simple fact of Muslim frustration with media images, although empirically well-established, has not been adequately analysed and explained in relation to social integration. Muslims consider their negative public ‘image’ to be a hindrance to social integration. They do not feel a sense of belonging if mainstream society views them in a derogatory way. According to evidence provided in this study, many Muslim leaders strive hard to change the public perception of Islam and Muslims.

This process lends itself well to a dramaturgical analysis. Dramaturgical analysis, as theorised by Goffman (1959), looks at the ways people engage in the presentation of self. People take various actions to craft a desirable image in the minds of their audience. This study provides an insight into strategies adopted by a segment of Muslim leaders to change
the image of Islam and Muslims in the Australian public sphere. They have struggled to ‘normalise’ the image of Islam and Muslims. They want to be portrayed as ordinary citizens and be seen as part of the mainstream society. They do not want to be singled out in public discourse.

Evidence shows that social integration can be usefully conceptualised as a normalisation process, through which stigmatised individuals and groups can achieve a status comparable with others. Some Muslim leaders have taken action to accelerate this process. Normalisation, however, is not a goal shared by all Muslim leaders and is contested by a minority of radicals. This thesis explores the dynamics of Muslim leadership and related controversies through the lens of the normalisation process. This process is expedited by ‘integrationist’ Muslim leaders who are often supported and funded by the Australian government. It is contested by ‘isolationist’ and ‘radical’ Muslim leaders who often receive a wide coverage in the mass media.

**THESIS STRUCTURE**

This thesis explores Australian Muslim leaders’ views of and approaches to social integration. Chapter Two explains the concept of social integration in classical sociology and argues that functionalist theory is inadequate for the explanation of social integration in modern multicultural contexts. Ethnicity is highlighted, and the two broad theories of multiculturalism and assimilation are discussed in relation to social integration. Social integration is then defined as a normalisation process for stigmatised persons and groups. Finally, the concepts of norm and normality, and their constructed nature, are explained.

Chapter Three reviews the literature on the integration of Australian Muslims into broader society. The historical construction of Islam as stagnant, pre-modern, despotic, and violent as opposed to the progressive, modern, democratic, and civilised West is discussed, drawing on Edward Said’s watershed book *Orientalism* (1978). Evidence of these Orientalist discourses in current Australian media images and political discourses is then
highlighted. The chapter concludes with a review of the literature regarding Australian Muslim leadership.

Methodological aspects of the study are outlined in Chapter Four. The sampling method, recruitment, in-depth interviews, confidentiality, and data analysis are described. The researcher is positioned as an ‘insider’, and the impact of this on the recruitment and interviewing process is explained. Finally, since real names are used for the majority of respondents, the literature on confidentiality and the use of pseudonyms is considered.

Chapter Five explores the organisational aspects of the normalisation process. Efforts by integrationist Muslim leaders to apply structural adjustments to facilitate the production of ‘normal’ Muslim voices and control those that are more provocative are outlined. Integrationist leaders’ strategies to encourage Muslim youth and women to take on leadership roles are described. The regulation of Imams’ voices through media training, the production of local Imams and the establishment of the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) are then explored. Finally, a summary is provided of attempts by integrationist leaders to enhance communication and encourage a more unified voice among discrete Muslim groups.

In Chapter Six, the discursive aspects of the normalisation process are addressed. This section highlights the ways in which integrationist leaders have attempted to undermine the constructed dichotomy of Islam/West. A critical examination is undertaken of their discourses in defence of the compatibility of Islam with Australian values and the promotion of an Australian Islam. It is shown that integrationist leaders reject the portrayal of Muslims as a uniquely different group in Australia. It also points out the tendency for Muslim leaders to make comparisons between Muslims and other ethnic and religious groups in order to demonstrate similarities rather than differences.

Chapters Seven and Eight investigate the counter-normalisation process. The normalisation process has been contested both within and outside Australian Muslim communities. From within, Muslim voices have offered interpretations of Islam that differ significantly from those of integrationists. Radical and isolationist Muslim groups undermine the consistency of the message communicated to the public by integrationist leaders. Chapter Eight
investigates another counter-force—the media. The media provides coverage of Muslim extremists that is out of proportion with their numbers, and this is not balanced by images of peaceful mainstream Muslims. Strategies of integrationist leaders designed to influence media discourses are also described.

Chapter Nine draws the preceding discussions together, and offers concluding remarks.
CHAPTER TWO: SOCIAL INTEGRATION AS A NORMALISATION PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

Normalisation is the process through which Muslims come to be seen as ordinary citizens and part of mainstream Australia. In other words, through the normalisation process, Muslims are mainstreamed. Normalisation as a process of social integration has been discussed in the context of disability (Wolfensberger 1980). In this chapter, I review the theories of assimilation and multiculturalism vis-à-vis social integration and argue that normalisation is a good concept to utilise in explaining the social integration of culturally-devalued migrants.

The concepts of norm and normality must be examined critically. They are social constructions and are connected to society’s power structures. Normalisation, therefore, does not amount to becoming good. Similarly, those who depart from the norm and are considered ‘deviant’ or ‘stigmatised’ are not necessarily morally deplorable. Those who choose to be viewed as ‘normal’ have to accept established power relations. The normalisation process can be activated by stigmatised people or imposed by mainstream society. In the first case, Goffman’s (1963) notion of ‘stigma management’ is relevant. In the second case Foucault’s conception of normalisation is illuminating.

This chapter starts with an exploration of social integration in the work of classical sociologists, particularly Emile Durkheim. Functionalist theory is critiqued as an insufficient theory for explaining the role of ethnicity vis-à-vis social integration in contemporary multicultural societies. The social integration of ethnic groups is then discussed with reference to two significant theories: multiculturalism and assimilation. At the end of the chapter, normalisation is explained as a useful concept in relation to the social integration of ethnic and cultural groups, particularly those that have been stigmatised.
SOCIAL COHESION AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Social cohesion has been at the centre of sociological enquiry since its inception. In fact, sociology as a science emerged in response to social upheavals emanating from revolutions, industrialisation and urbanisation in Europe in the nineteenth century. The rise of industrial societies compromised traditional social bonds of kinship and family. In response to these developments, classical sociologists such as Comte (1975) and Durkheim (1964) developed a scientific approach to the study of social order and social stability. Durkheim’s (1964) concepts of mechanical and organic solidarity, Weber’s (1948) conceptions of bureaucracy and rationalisation, and Toennies’ (1988) notions of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft exemplify attempts by early sociologists to account for the emergence of new societal orders.

Durkheim (1964) developed the influential theory of functionalism, according to which society is perceived as being made up of parts that work smoothly together to sustain stability, order and social solidarity. He established a typology of society based on modes of social connections. Pre-modern societies, he argued, were predicated on mechanical solidarity where people were organised around kinship networks, doing similar jobs and holding similar beliefs. In contrast, industrial societies created a new type of social solidarity—namely organic solidarity—based around a division of labour. These societies have differentiated, and at the same time highly-interconnected spheres of market, education, media, politics, entertainment and religion.

Durkheim (1964) attributed a prime role to morality in his discussions about society. To him, neither traditional nor modern societies can be sustained without the existence of common values and norms: ‘The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society forms a determinate system with a life of its own. It can be termed the collective or common consciousness’ (1964, p.38-39). He maintained that traditional societies, in transforming into a modern society, invented new forms of moral regulations to secure social cohesion. Division of labour, according to Durkheim, not only does not undermine social solidarity, but strengthens it. Common norms and values are the basis of society. If they were to collapse, the result would be an anomic society: ‘If the division of
labour does not produce solidarity, it is because the relationships between the organs are not regulated; it is because they are in a state of *anomie*’ (p.304). Therefore, social solidarity rests on a common moral system within a society:

Thus we may state generally that the characteristic of moral rules is that they enunciate the basic conditions of social solidarity. Law and morality represent the totality of bonds that bind us to one another and to society, which shape the mass of individuals into cohesive aggregate. (Durkheim 1964, p.331)

Social cohesion in modern societies therefore rests on a normatively-regulated division of labour. Parsons (1968) advanced this theory and suggested four major functions of any social system: adaptation (economy), goal attainment (politics), integration (community), and maintenance (culture). Every social system and subsystem should generate these functions to remain stable and cohesive. This functionalist model has largely shaped state policies for the social integration of migrants and refugees. As O’Brien and Penna (2006, p.85) stated: ‘The dominant discourse of European social policy construes the institutions of the labour market and the welfare state as “integrative” mechanisms’.

This is also the case with the Australian government’s social inclusion policies (Australian Government 2008). As far as migrants are concerned, this framework has resulted in initiatives for the improvement of migrants’ and refugees’ opportunities in the job market and their access to social services. This is often called socio-economic integration. The term ‘socio-economic’ (often used as ‘socio-economic status’ [SES]) is a combination of indicators of education, income and employment. Socio-economic integration, therefore, refers to the ‘attainment of average or above average socioeconomic standing by indicators such as education, occupation, and income’ (Alba & Nee 1997; Bloemraad 2007). Cultural and political aspects of social integration are not considered in this definition.

The frameworks of functionalism and socio-economic integration are not adequate in explaining social integration in contemporary multicultural societies. Indeed, ethnicity was not in the focus of classical functionalists such as Durkheim, simply because migration flows and ethnic communities emerged mainly in the twentieth century. The issues that concerned Durkheim and other classical sociologists were industrialisation, urbanisation,
bureaucratisation, and democratisation. These compromised social order and social cohesion in European societies in the nineteenth century. Williams (1958, p.332) held that social solidarity is ‘basically, a defensive attitude, the natural mentality of the long siege. It has in part depended, that is to say, on an enemy’. This implies that social integration theories are developed to account for factors deemed threatening to social order. In the nineteenth century, cultural diversity was not considered threatening to social cohesion. Another reason for the lack of attention to ethnicity by classical functionalists is that they assigned a salient role to the moral foundations of society (religion, culture, norms, values and the like). Durkheim theorised social solidarity as based around the homogeneity of the moral system. If the moral system were to be undermined, society would collapse. This analytical framework obviously needs to be reworked if it is to be applicable to modern societies where multiple cultures, religions and normative systems coexist.

In the twentieth century, the perceived ‘enemies’ (in William’s terms) of social solidarity gradually changed. In the early twentieth century millions of Europeans immigrated to the United States. In the second half of the century, immigration flows significantly changed the social fabric of almost all western societies. The ethnic and religious heterogeneity of western democracies increased unprecedentedly and will continue to grow in the coming decades. Cultural diversity and migration have become important issues in policy areas, scholarly research and minority advocacy groups.

Wagner (2007, p.94) criticised the neglect of culture in European states’ policies for the social integration of migrants, arguing that ‘colour, culture, and creed’ have become the systems of social stratification and social exclusion. He asserted that socio-economic integration does not provide an adequate account for social integration, and that a wider model is needed. He also claimed that the systems of social exclusion based on ethnicity, religion, and culture, cannot be adequately addressed unless the political dimensions of social integration are highlighted. Yasmeen (2010, p.17) echoed Wagner’s argument, saying that Australian Muslims have been excluded from mainstream Australia both socio-economically and culturally. She asserted that the Australian government’s policies for social inclusion, which have been largely defined in socio-economic terms, are not effective unless comparable attention is paid to the recognition of Muslims’ identity, culture, and
religion. In other words, culture has become a source of social exclusion for Muslims and any attempt for their social integration needs to factor that in. These scholars emphasised the role of cultural recognition in the process of social integration. The relationship between cultural diversity and social cohesion has long been debated. Multiple theories and policies have emerged to deal with the issue of cultural diversity in the light of social cohesion. Among them, the theories (and policies) of multiculturalism and assimilation are paramount.

ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN POLICY AND SOCIAL THEORY

The Australian government initiated mass immigration plans after the Second World War. In 1947, the Australian population was 7.6 million, and this had doubled by 1979 (National Multicultural Advisory Council 1999). Immigration has profoundly changed the demographics of Australia. The 2011 census revealed that 26 per cent of the Australian population was born overseas and an additional 20 per cent had at least one overseas-born parent (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012b). A similar trend has occurred in North America and parts of Europe. In conjunction with the growing ethnic diversity of western countries in the twentieth century, a number of sociological and political theories have been developed to explain the implications of such diversity for social cohesion. Assimilation theory was the first, developed in the US in early twentieth century.

Assimilation theory

The first sociological theory dealing with ethnic diversity emerged in Chicago, which had received a mass influx of European immigrants in the early twentieth century. Robert Park, together with his colleagues, was the first sociologist who sought to theorise the integration of new European immigrants with American society. Park and Burgess (1921, p.735) introduced the theory of ‘race relations cycle’, arguing that immigrants pass through the
stages of contact, competition, accommodation and assimilation. According to this theory, assimilation is the end point of the integration process. They defined assimilation as:

... a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life. In so far as assimilation denotes this sharing of tradition, this intimate participation in common experiences, assimilation is central in the historical and cultural processes.

This quote shows that Park and Burgess (1921) regarded cultural adaptation as being at the centre of the assimilation process. Moreover, assimilation was not considered to be only a natural self-propelling social process, but it was considered desirable: ‘Assimilation is thus as inevitable as it is desirable’ (Park and Miller 1921, p.308). The desirability of assimilation prompted most western governments, including Australia, to devise policies to expedite the assimilation process. Most western states deployed their resources to facilitate the assimilation process by providing education, language classes and cultural training programs. Migrants were also expected to abandon their ethnic visibility and become culturally indistinguishable from the rest of society.

The sociological interest in assimilation declined with the rise of multiculturalism policies in most parts of the West in the 1960s and 1970s. However, assimilationism re-surfaced, and has gained a new momentum in both policy and theory since the 1990s (Brubaker 2001). Two notable approaches are New Assimilation and Segmented Assimilation, both of which evolved out of the US experience with immigration. Segmented Assimilation theory criticised classic straight-line assimilation evident in Park’s race relation cycle theory. Portes and Zhou (1993) argued that second-generation immigrants in the US have followed three paths: assimilation into the White middle class, downward mobility towards an underclass, and rapid upward socio-economic mobility by retaining and capitalising on ethnic culture. In Segmented Assimilation theory, the question is not whether second-generation migrants assimilate; rather, the question is which section of society they assimilate to (Portes, Ferna´ndez-Kelly & Haller 2005; Zhou 1997).
New Assimilation theory was developed by Alba and Nee (1997), who claimed that assimilation has been widely occurring in America. They argued that no other theory has replaced the basic framework of assimilation theory. They asserted that migrants in America rationally choose to assimilate into mainstream society simply because the opportunities for upward social mobility are greater in the mainstream. Concurrently, anti-discrimination laws have, more or less, enhanced the possibility for socio-economic mobility and the immigrants do take up these opportunities.

These new assimilation theories do not carry the ideological substance of early assimilation theories. As Alba and Nee (1997, p. 829) said:

> As a state-imposed normative program aimed at eradicating minority cultures, assimilation has been justifiably repudiated. But as a social process that occurs spontaneously and often unintendedly in the course of interaction between majority and minority groups, assimilation remains a key concept for the study of intergroup relations.

Similarly, Brubaker (2001, p.543) suggested that the new assimilation theories are more focused on socio-economic arenas than on culture. He also held that they consider assimilation a long and inter-generational process.

Assimilation theories have not primarily addressed social cohesion. Rather, they have tried to delineate dimensions and stages of assimilation processes. Bloemraad (2007) claimed that sociologists have studied residential dispersion, intermarriages, language shift and acculturation in order to measure social assimilation, but they have largely neglected political and civic integration of migrants. She further contended that socio-economic integration has been the contribution of sociological theory while multiculturalism theory was advanced by political theory. I discuss multiculturalism shortly, but first two important arguments in support of assimilation must be addressed: social capital and national identity arguments.

According to Putnam (2007, p.137), social capital is ‘social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness’. Putnam (2007) conducted a nation-wide survey
in America to investigate the relationship between ethnic heterogeneity and social capital. He concluded his study as follows:

In the short run, … new evidence from the US suggests that in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods residents of all races tend to ‘hunker down’. Trust (even in one’s own race) is lower, altruism and community cooperation rarer, friends fewer. In the long run, however, successful immigrant societies have overcome such fragmentation by creating new, cross cutting forms of social solidarity and more encompassing identities’. (2007, p.137)

Putnam (2007) drew on social psychological studies of social distance, claiming that people trust each other and cooperate more smoothly when social distance is less. He contended that cultural diversity could be detrimental to social solidarity in the short run. However, the development of encompassing identities can bridge social distance and foster trust and social capital. He claimed that in the United States the development of encompassing identities in the twentieth century have contained the disintegrative effects of diversity. By encompassing identities, Putnam referred to the emergence of hyphenated identities such as Irish Americans, German Americans, and Arab Americans, whereby people identify with both the American national identity and their own ethnic identity. This implies that it is common identity that integrates society and not common culture. I return to this point shortly.

Renowned American political thinker Fukuyama, in his book *Trust: the social virtues and the creation of prosperity* (1995), established a direct link between social trust and national economic prosperity. He argued that ‘a shared “language of good and evil” is critical to the creation of trust, social capital, and all other positive economic consequences that flow from these attributes’ (1995, p.270). Cultural diversity, however, undermines this shared language of good and evil. Hence cultural diversity ‘is better taken in small sips than in large gulps’ (Fukuyama, 1995, p.305). Unlike multiculturalists, he maintains that ‘the more one is familiar with different cultures, the more one understands that they are not created equally’ (Fukuyama 1995, p.318). The immigration process has been successful in the United States, he said, because diversity ‘has been harnessed to the central American
institutions’ (1995, p.318). He warned that ‘if our [western] societies cannot assert positive liberal values, they may be challenged by migrants who are more sure of who they are’ (Fukuyama 2007). These arguments, consistent with Durkheim’s theory, view cultural homogeneity and assimilation as essential to the sustenance of social cohesion.

Similar studies in Australia affirm the detrimental effects of ethnic and cultural diversity on social capital and social cohesion. Leigh (2006) carried out an analysis of data from the Australian Community Survey (n=6500) to explore the relationship between trust, inequality and social heterogeneity. He divided social trust into localised (local level) and generalised (national level) trust. His study showed that immigrants have lower levels of localised trust. Furthermore, trust is lower in ethnically and linguistically diverse neighbourhoods.

In another study, Healy (2007) explored the relationship between ethnic diversity and social cohesion in Melbourne. Following Putnam (2007), he took volunteer work as an indicator for civic engagement, social capital and social cohesion. His study revealed that the rate of volunteer work among migrants from non-English-speaking countries is significantly less than Australian-born people and migrants from English-speaking countries. The results were not contingent on socio-economic status of migrants. Healy suggested that migrants of non-English-speaking countries are disproportionately represented in poor strata and in certain suburbs of Melbourne (for example the City of Dandenong), which leads to lower social capital. He pointed out that the decline of social capital in Australia may not be apparent now, but it could be ‘cumulative’ (2006, p.63).

These studies contended that when societies undergo ethnic diversification, social trust diminishes overall, because ‘trust may exist within the groups, but not across them’ (Miller 1995, chap 4, p. 10). Miller (1995) maintained that social trust does not develop in a society unless citizens share a common identity. In modern societies, Miller claimed, citizens do not know each other personally, but monitor each other’s behaviour. In such societies, a sense of community and a shared identity is essential to encourage citizens’ confidence that their cooperative behaviours are reciprocated. To Miller (1995), national identity, is crucial for the maintenance of social trust among citizens:
If we believe in social justice and are concerned about winning democratic support for socially just policies, then we must pay attention to the conditions under which different groups will trust one another, so that I can support your just demand on this occasion knowing that you will support my just demand at some future moment. Trust requires solidarity not merely within groups but across them, and this in turn depends upon a common identification of the kind that nationality alone can provide (chap 5, p. 18).

In this quote, social trust is linked to national identity. Miller (1995) considered the existence of a public culture essential for the development of a national identity. He argued that social trust is higher within groups because people who share similar socialisation and cultural values are more likely to trust each other. Trust and a sense of community allow people to make sacrifices by taking part in community activities, participating in political debates, defending the nation at times of war, and supporting the re-distribution of resources. This implies that democratic social integration requires voluntary participation of citizens in the community, which presupposes trust, a common culture and a national identity.

Taylor (2006, p.501) held that national identity is more important in democratic than non-democratic societies for securing social cohesion. He claimed that ethnic and religious groups have co-existed peacefully in empires such as the Ottoman and Mughal much better than in twentieth-century democracies. These empires, argues Taylor (2006, p.507), had ‘a very good record of “multi-cultural” tolerance’, while the twentieth century is ‘the age of ethnic cleansing’. The reason, he asserted, lies in the very nature of democracy. Unlike empires, people in a democracy exert a collective will for the functioning of the state. Taylor (2006, p.504) contended that ‘a sovereign people, in order to have the unity needed for collective agency, had to have an antecedent unity of culture, history, or (more often in Europe) language’. Now the question is what happens to a nation when it undergoes cultural and ethnic diversity? Does cultural diversity undermine the ‘collective will’? Cultural nationalists argue it does, as is seen in Miller’s (1995) arguments outlined above.
Berger (1998, p. 355) related social cohesion to the question of who we are. He argued that civic integration (of which more below) is too thin to keep a society together. He described a civic model of integration as something like ‘a traffic-system model of social order’ where obeying the laws secures social order (1998, p. 354). He critiqued the civic model of social cohesion and contended that civic connections would not be working in the event of crisis, saying that ‘whenever members of a society are called upon to make sacrifices for the common good, the presence of a “collective conscience” is essential’ (Berger 1998, p. 354). This is to say that a ‘collective conscience’ or common culture is crucial to sustain social stability and social cohesion.

In summary, assimilationists view cultural homogeneity as essential for social order and social cohesion. They claim that a culturally-homogeneous society functions better. People who have identical values and have had similar socialisation processes trust each other more easily, and this leads to a sense of reciprocity and community. A sense of community underpins social cohesion and social order. A democratic social integration process requires citizens to participate actively in society and to make sacrifices. This is unlikely to happen if they do not trust each other. Cultural groups have separate languages of good and evil, and experience dissimilar socialisation processes. This reduces the level of social trust between cultural groups because trust across groups is less than within groups. Hence it can be concluded that in ethnically diverse societies, social trust diminishes, the common (national) identity weakens, and consequently social cohesion is compromised.

Two concepts in these arguments should be distinguished: common culture and common identity. In line with Durkheim, some of these arguments view common culture as the cornerstone of social cohesion. Others argue that social cohesion predicates upon a common (national) identity. This distinction is crucial because societies with multiple cultures can develop a common identity. Despite Durkheim’s view, social cohesion rests on common identity and not common culture. As Kymlicka (1996, p. 131) claimed:

What matters is not shared values, but a *shared identity*. A shared conception of justice throughout a multinational political community does not necessarily generate a shared identity, let alone a shared civic identity that will supersede rival national
identities … What holds Americans together, despite their disagreements over the nature of the good life, is the fact that they share an identity as Americans. Conversely, what keeps Swedes and Norwegians apart, despite their shared principles of justice, is the lack of a shared identity.

Ethnic and cultural heterogeneity do not rule out the development of a national identity. A multicultural society could nurture a strong national identity and secure social cohesion. Putnam (2007) claimed that ethnic diversity frustrates social capital in the short run. But, he pointed out, in the long term, a common identity is likely to develop. He referred to the emergence of hyphenated identities in the US as a success story. Americans, despite diverse ethnic backgrounds, have succeeded in developing a strong national identity.

This argument has been affirmed by social psychological studies which indicate that ethnic identity and national identity do not negate each other. Citizens of a multiethnic society can identify both with their ethnic and national identities. These identities, Homsey and Hogg (2000, p. 153) claimed, can coexist harmoniously. They asserted that disharmony and conflict may emerge if the subgroup identity (ethnic identity) is threatened. Interestingly, they contended that social cohesion is likely to be jeopardised if national identity is defined very broadly and inclusively. In such cases, the divergence and differentiation of ethnic identities increases: ‘The more inclusive the superordinate category [national identity] is perceived to be, the more people strive for differentiation at the subgroup [ethnic] level’ (Homsey and Hogg 2000, p. 149). This means that social cohesion is compromised if national identity is defined too narrowly (which threatens ethnic identity) or too broadly (which allows for ethnic differentiations). Hence, a society remains harmonious ‘if the superordinate category [national identity] is well defined and affords adequate distinctiveness’ (Homsey and Hogg 2000, p. 149). Similarly, Miller (1995 chap 2, p.4) suggested that ethnic and national identity do not necessarily negate each other. What creates conflict is a threat to ethnic identity:

It seems perfectly possible for ethnicity and nationality to co-exist, neither threatening to drive out the other. Everything will depend on whether the ethnic
group feels secure and comfortable with its national identity and the political institutions that correspond to it.

So ethnic and national identities could co-exist in a harmonious way. Harmony is jeopardised if ethnic identity is threatened. I will come back to this point when I provide my definition of social integration as a process of normalisation. So far, I have provided a critique of the Durkheimian framework of social cohesion. I have argued that functionalism, the dominant paradigm of social integration, deals mainly with socio-economic integration and does not account for the political and cultural aspects of social integration. Considering that contemporary western societies are highly culturally diverse, functionalism is an inadequate framework for understanding social cohesion. Moreover, I have argued that cultural diversity does not necessarily undermine national identity. I have critiqued the assimilationist view of the centrality of common culture for social cohesion. It is not common values that hold society together, but common identity. Multiple ethnic, religious, and cultural groups could live harmoniously side by side and people could simultaneously identify with their ethnic and national identities. One factor that may bring about conflict is the threat to ethnic identity. This accords with the assertion of multiculturalists that recognition and respect of ethnic identities brings about social harmony and diminishes social conflicts.

**Multiculturalism and social cohesion**

In opposition to assimilationism, Multiculturalism is often defined as a theory, ideology, and policy in support of minorities’ identities. Some scholars have provided more nuanced definitions. For instance, Modood (2011) noted four layers of support for cultural diversity: assimilation, individualist-integration, cosmopolitanism, and multiculturalism. Hartman and Gerteis (2005) criticised the placement of multiculturalism in linear opposition to assimilationism. Instead they offered a four-layered model: assimilationism, fragmented pluralism, interactive pluralism and cosmopolitanism. Hall (2001) noted several types of multiculturalism: conservative, liberal, pluralist, commercial, and corporate multiculturalism. ‘Multicultural society’ is defined broadly as a society in which ‘several
self-conscious and more or less well-organized communities [are] entertaining and living by their own different systems of beliefs and practice’ (Parekh 2006, p. 3). Multiculturalism is a theory which recognises cultural differences and assigns equal worth to cultures. Taylor (1992, p.64) suggested that in multiculturalism ‘we all recognize the equal value of different cultures; that we not only let them survive, but acknowledge their worth’. As a policy, multiculturalism encourages people to retain their culture, language and traditions. In multiculturalist policy, difference is normalised whereas in assimilationism similarity is valorised. The question that concerns me here is the relationship between multiculturalism and social cohesion.

Multiculturalism emerged as one strand of a broader political turn in western societies in the 1960s, which is often referred to as ‘identity politics’. In the 1960s and 1970s, a number of social movements, such as the feminist and civil rights movements, opened up a new political era in which social identity became an important ground for political mobilisation (Fraser 1995). Since then, women, blacks, gays, indigenous people and ethnic minorities have actively demanded recognition from mainstream society. Political struggles around minority rights have triggered heated debates and split the electorate at election time in most western countries.

Concurrently, the ‘politics of recognition’ has become an important area of scholarship in academia. Theories of multiculturalism have been largely developed by political thinkers rather than by sociologists. Political thinkers such as Taylor (1992), Kymlicka (1995) and Parekh (2006) have greatly contributed to theories of multiculturalism. The associated areas, such as the ‘politics of recognition’, were also mostly theorised by political thinkers such as Fraser (1995), Fukuyama (1992) and Honneth (1996). Sociologists have been more concerned with theories of socio-economic integration, while the above theorists are more concerned with political integration. Bloemraad (2007, p. 318) pointed out that ‘multiculturalism is, above all, a theory of political inclusion and citizenship’ and not a theory of socio-economic integration.

Multiculturalism theories and policies were developed to deal with the political and cultural integration of migrants. Nonetheless, since the 1990s there have been misgivings about and
retreats from multiculturalism (Brubaker 2001; Joppke 2004; Prins & Slijper 2002). Bloemraad (2007) noted three reasons often given for the failure of multiculturalism: Some claim firstly that multiculturalism undermines national identity and leads to political fragmentation. Second, it weakens the support for re-distribution and, hence, undermines the welfare state. Third, it reifies differences by emphasising ethnic backgrounds, thereby weakening social integration. All these critiques, in one way or another, are bound up with the issue of social cohesion. I will explain this issue, but that requires a brief introduction to the theory of multiculturalism.

Taylor (1992) provided one the most solid theories of multiculturalism, arguing that recognition of the individual’s identity is essential for their self-realisation. The individual’s identity is bound up with the culture through which they experience socialisation. The non-recognition of an individual’s identity ‘can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being’ (1992, p.25). This is to say that in a multicultural society, social justice requires that there should not be any stigma attached to cultural identities. The recognition of an identity, I suggest, means that the dominant institutions of society (e.g. media, state, education) respect ethnic identity and do not attach negative attributes to it. In other words, ethnic identity is accepted as normal in society. As noted in Taylor’s quote above, multiculturalism is profoundly connected with social justice. It is just to recognise ethnic identities, and oppressive not to. The concept of social justice has widely permeated the literature on multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism is basically a theory of citizenship and largely deals with citizens’ ‘rights’ (Kymlicka 1995). So it is not surprising that social integration or social cohesion have not been the main reference points in theories of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism theory has been developed in normative sciences such as political science, and around the notions of ‘rights’, ‘citizenship’, and ‘social justice’. The language of rights and social justice is also embedded in multiculturalism policy documents, such as the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia (OMA 1989). Therefore, it is not surprising that socio-economic integration has not been addressed in multiculturalism theories.
Social integration in multiculturalism theory, is framed as ‘civic integration’. Unlike assimilationism, which requires migrants to adopt the host society’s norms, values, and worldviews, civic integration requires minimal adjustments. Goodman (2010, p. 754) claimed that ‘the objective of civic integration is not transforming cultural affinities or assimilationist uniformity but promoting functional individual autonomy’. The ‘civic’ component of civic integration is related to the notion of ‘citizenship’. Bloemraad (2007) suggested that ‘civic’ citizenship has often been pitted against ‘ethnic’ citizenship. The latter, she argued, exists in societies where social bonds are linked to a common descent and nationhood is defined in ethnic terms. In contrast, civic citizenship refers to political attachments rather than ethnic and cultural bonds. Civic citizenship is then, more open to immigrants. Goodman (2010) noted that in European policies widespread adoption of language, country knowledge, and acceptance of liberal values are the criteria of civic integration. At a policy level, country knowledge and values, are often operationalised by requiring that educational courses and citizenship tests are taken and ceremonies are attended. The Australian National Multicultural Advisory Council required migrants to accept the law, a democratic form of government and English as the national language (National Multicultural Advisory Council 1999). As seen, this is a minimal approach to social integration and does not require cultural assimilation.

Now the question is whether these minimal requirements are adequate to sustain social order and harmony. In other words, does the recognition of culture have anything to do with social cohesion? Honneth’s (1996) theory of recognition is one of the best responses to this question.

The role of culture vis-a-vis social conflict is under-theorised in classical sociology. Neither consensus nor conflict theories have accounted for this issue. In Durkheim’s (1964) theory, culture, or collective conscience, is the foundation of social order and social solidarity. Culture is the source of harmony, not conflict. Also, conflict theories do not assign any role to culture in producing conflicts (Rex 1961). They explained social conflicts as being mainly based around material inequalities (class conflicts). Hence neither of these frameworks takes subjective elements of society (values, norms, beliefs) as sources of social conflict. This is the critique Honneth (1996) provided against classical sociology. He
asserted that classical sociology failed to account for the role of subjective aspects of society in producing conflicts. He introduced ‘the moral grammar for social conflicts’ and developed a theory of conflict based around ‘the struggles for recognition’.

This theory, which fits well with the ‘identity politics’ age, considers ‘non-recognition’ to be a source of social conflicts. Contemporary social movements such as feminism, ethnic nationalism, the black rights movement, the gay rights movements and indigenous rights movements all demand legal and symbolic recognition from society’s institutions. Non-recognition of their identity could fuel social conflicts. As far as Muslims are concerned, respect for Islam by the West is their number one demand. Gallup’s global survey of Muslim attitudes towards the West indicated that what Muslims ‘admire least about the West’ is ‘hatred or degradation of Islam and Muslims’ (Esposito & Mogahed 2007, p.61).

The Honneth theory implies that multiculturalism is not only a theory of citizenship, but also of social harmony. Multiculturalism recognises and respects cultural identities within the limits of law. The state, the media and the education system have to respect group identities and valorise cultural differences. This would not only secure social justice, but also social harmony. Unlike assimilationism, cultural homogeneity is not viewed as being essential for social cohesion. Hence multiculturalism does not preclude a sense of community and does not necessarily undermine national identity. As explained earlier, a common identity is fundamental to social cohesion. Multicultural societies are able to develop strong national identities, as seen in the case of the United States. The Australian National Multiculturalism Advisory Council (National Multicultural Advisory Council 1999, p. 14) considered multiculturalism a ‘defining feature’ of Austria’s ‘evolving national identity’.

In the previous section I referred to social psychological arguments about the dynamics of subgroup and superordinate identities (corresponding to ethnic and national identity). On the one hand, if superordinate identity is defined very narrowly to exclude subgroup identity, this causes social disharmony. On the other hand, if superordinate identity is defined too inclusively and broadly, this leads to growing differentiation between subgroup identities and compromises social cohesion. These arguments resonate with the Honneth
theory. The common denominator is that social cohesion is deeply bound up with social identity. In multicultural societies, the recognition of ethnic and group identities contributes to social harmony. This obviously does not dismiss the likelihood of other types of conflicts (such as those of class).

Social cohesion necessitates the recognition of ethnic identities. Democratic social integration occurs when minority identities are respected and recognised. For stigmatised and devalued cultural groups, the process of social integration necessarily involves the normalisation of their identity, which enables them to identify with mainstream society and integrate smoothly.

INTEGRATION AS A NORMALISATION PROCESS

Social integration, then, can be defined as a normalisation process. This is particularly relevant for stigmatised social groups. A social group is defined as ‘normal’ if mainstream society and society’s institutions (particularly the media, state, and education) do not describe them in negative terms. I use the term normalisation as a synonym for mainstreaming. The concept of normalisation has been used in a variety of contexts and these will be briefly reviewed. Prior to this, I examine the concepts of norm and normal, particularly emphasising the constructed nature of normality in society.

NORMS AND NORMALITY

Norm and normal are complex concepts. They play a central role in this thesis and need careful analysis. In particular, the notion of ‘normal’ needs critical scrutiny. I will first explain these concepts, and make a distinction between two conceptions of normality, namely medical/normative and statistical/descriptive. Then I investigate the social construction of normality and explore the role of power in the establishment and reproduction of norms and normality.
Social norms are the behavioural rules to which people are generally expected to conform. Those not conforming to these are punished in direct and indirect ways. The norm not only describes what commonplace behaviours are, but valorises them. Foucault (2003, p.50) maintained that a norm ‘brings with it a principle of both qualification and correction’. Similarly, Hacking (1996, p.65) held that ‘the norm may be what is usual, but our most powerful ethical constraints are also called norms’. This is also evident in the etymological root of the term. Etymologically, the word ‘norm’ is rooted in the Latin word *norma*, which means T-square. So we can infer that the norm is something that rights and straightens (Conguilhem 1978). Norms are commonplace rules and practices with which people should strive to comply. So we see that the boundary between ‘is’ and ‘ought’ is blurred in the concept of norm, which is a complicating factor (Hacking 1990).

Grammatically, normal is simply an adjective for norm. However, the meaning of normal has changed dramatically in modern times. The term normal first appeared in medical sciences in the nineteenth century, and referred to ‘healthy’ as opposed to abnormal/pathological. Later on, the term was entered into the social and political lexicon mainly by Auguste Comte (Hacking 1990). Societies, in Comte’s view, are analogous to living organisms. They have a ‘normal state’ which denotes a healthy state of affairs. Sociology’s task, in Comte’s view, was to understand the disintegrative thrust of modernity and take it back to a normal state (Hacking 1990). Similarly, Durkheim (1964b) used the concept of normal as opposed to pathological. This medical notion is normative and the normal carries a positive or perhaps a moral value. The abnormal/pathological connotes sickness and something that has to be cured.

Another conception of normality is the statistical/descriptive approach. As already said, the notion of normal first appeared in the medical sphere in the nineteenth century, but soon traversed to pedagogy, economy, transportation, industry, and politics (Conguilhem 1978). This shift was rooted in the rising function of statistics in various spheres of society. In the nineteenth century, statistics came to be increasingly utilised for the enumeration, classification and tabulation of social matters (e.g. suicide, madness, and prostitution) and also people (e.g. the census). The prevalence of statistical notions of society gave rise to ‘statistical laws’ in human affairs. Hacking (1990) asserted that in this period the
Aristotelian notion of ‘human nature’ was gradually replaced by ‘normal people’. In other words, the rise of ‘statistical laws’ in the explanation of social affairs meant that ‘people are normal if they conform to the central tendency of such laws’ (Hacking 1990, p.2). Ewald (1990) claimed that in the nineteenth century, the norm no longer essentially referred to rectitude and square, but to the average. Link (2004) differentiated between normality and normativity, holding that normativity is an ancient concept, while normality is a specific ‘achievement’ of modern western societies. Normality, Link (2004, p.35) contended, exists ‘only in cultures that continuously, routinely, comprehensively, and institutionally make themselves statistically transparent’. Normality, therefore, is a characteristic of ‘data processing societies’. Ewald (1990, p. 156) referred to the interconnectedness of norms and statistics that ‘the science of statistics resembles the language of the norm both in its vocabulary and its syntax’.

In the statistical/descriptive sense, normality does not necessarily convey a value judgment. Normal practices, beliefs, values, and behaviours are those held by a sizable number of people in a given society. Normal curve is characteristic of this definition. Normal, then, is not morally good, but rather middling or ‘mediocre’. Those who ‘deviate’ from the norm are not ‘sick’ but could be ‘superb’ (Hacking 1990, p.178). Hacking (1990) contended that this statistical notion of normal has become largely embedded in today’s western cultures. This, he asserted, is evident in the IQ test and what is often defined as normal behaviour. This is affirmed by the dictionary definition of normality, the Oxford Dictionary defining ‘normal’ as ‘conforming to a standard; usual, typical, or expected’. This is the definition that I adopt in this study.

In this thesis I use ‘stigmatised’ and ‘deviant’ in opposition to ‘normal’, and I do not confer moral value on any of these concepts. Wolfensberger (1980) used ‘normal’ and ‘deviant’ in the context of disability. He employed the term ‘deviancy’ to describe disabled people, obviously without any negative moral value. He suggested that:

A person becomes deviant by a) being different from others, in b) one or more dimensions of identity, which c) are viewed as significant by others, and d) this differentness must be negatively valued. It is not differentness itself that makes for
deviancy in this definition, but *negatively valued differentness*. (Wolfensberger 1980, p.8, emphases in the original)

This definition is very broad and includes everyone who is different from the mainstream and whose differentness is valued negatively. In this definition, deviancy is defined much more broadly than deviant behaviours (for instance, criminal activity). Wolfensberger (1980) noted three sources of deviancy: physical characteristics, behaviour, and attribution (e.g. descent and nationality). He contended that throughout history and across societies devalued people have belonged to a small number of role images: ‘subhuman individual, the object of dread or menace, the object of ridicule or pity, the holy innocent, the burden of charity, the eternal child, or the sick person’ (p.9).

The above definition of deviancy is similar to Goffman’s definition of ‘stigma’. Goffman (1963) used ‘stigmatised’ in opposition to ‘normal’ people. Normal people, he (1963, p.15) suggested, are ‘those who do not depart negatively from the particular expectation at issue’ and he defined stigma as ‘an undesired differentness from what we had anticipated’. Stigma does not necessarily refer to extreme negative characteristics, but includes a broad range of qualities such as ‘mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, unemployment, suicidal attempts, and radical political behaviour’ (Goffman 1963, p.14). In Goffman’s view, most people experience stigma at some point in their lives. He pointed out, for instance, that the most normal Americans are those who are: ‘young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual, protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight and height and a recent record in sport’ and ‘any male who fails to qualify in any of these ways is likely to view himself—during moments at least—as unworthy, incomplete, and inferior’ (1963, p.153). Therefore, the term deviance, as defined here, is similar to stigma and ranges from criminal activities to ethnic markers and political radicals.

These definitions (undesired differentness and negatively-valued differentness) also reveal the constructed nature of deviancy and stigma. Deviancy and stigma are social constructions. Social constructionism is a theory developed by Berger and Luckman (1966). It is the opposite of essentialism and views social realities as being historical and dynamic. In constructionism, social phenomena (e.g. gender, race, nation, norms) do not
possess objective and inherent characteristics, but are constructed through people’s interactions. Social realities change when people’s perceptions about them change. Social constructionism is one of the most widespread theoretical frameworks in current sociology and is applied in the study of various social issues.

‘Social problems’ is one of the areas which has been theorised through the prism of social constructionism. Traditionally, issues such as poverty, prostitution, suicide and violence have been considered social problems for which sociologists have attempted to offer solutions. But social constructionism challenged this perception. A social matter is a ‘problem’ if people perceive it as a problem. In other words, there is nothing inherent in social issues such as poverty, violence, racism, and sexism to make them social problems. They become social problems when people come to think of them as problems. If at a particular time mainstream society views an issue as a ‘problem’, then it becomes a social problem.

Loseke and Best (2003) examined various social issues such as spanking, crime, smoking, AIDS, homosexuality, bullying, anti-Semitism, violence, drug abuse and child abuse through social constructionism. They showed that these issues are context-sensitive and vary across societies and time. It is obvious that there is not a clear-cut boundary between normal social issues and social problems. Rather, it is a continuum. In a democracy, if a social issue is perceived as a problem by a sizable number of people, then it is a problem.

This is also true for deviancy and normality. The constructionist perspective explains deviancy and normality as contingent upon social, political, and cultural contexts. Normal practices, beliefs and values in a given society might be perceived as deviant in other societies. Wolfensberger (1980, p.13) suggested that ‘deviancy is socially, subjectively, and variably defined, and varies from culture to culture and time to time, it is relative. It is not within the person; it is within the imposed social roles, the values, and the perceiver’s interpretation’. This echoes the sociological literature on deviancy. Labelling theory suggested that deviancy does not lie within the person and the act, but in society’s reaction. Becker (2003 [1963], p. 72), who introduced the theory, argued that:
If we take as the object of our attention behaviour which comes to be labelled as deviant, we must recognize that we cannot know whether a given act will be categorized as deviant until the response of others has occurred. Deviance is not a quality that lies in behaviour itself, but in the interaction between the person who commits an act and those who respond to it.

Society’s reaction is to a large degree determined by its power structure. Power plays a central role in determining what is viewed as normal or deviant. Foucault (1995) has comprehensively examined this issue. He argued that power in modern societies operates through the normalisation of its subjects.

NORMALISATION

I defined social integration as a process of normalisation for those who are stigmatised in society. To the best of my knowledge, this definition has not been used in the context of ethnicity. Nonetheless it has been used in other fields such as disability studies. Social Role Valorisation theory, which was introduced and popularised by Wolfensberger (1980), rests on this definition. This theory investigates how disabled people could find a ‘normal’ status in society. Although the theory developed in the disability field, its conceptual framework is broad and applicable to other fields. I quoted Wolfensberger’s definition of deviancy above as ‘negatively valued differentness’ which is very broad and could apply to any stigmatised group.

Wolfensberger (1980) argued that societal responses to deviancy throughout history can be categorised into four types: destroying deviancy (e.g. capital punishment, abortion, genocide, and euthanasia); protecting non-deviants from deviants (e.g. repression, rejection, confinement, and punishment); protecting deviants from non-deviants (e.g. segregation); and reversing deviancy (e.g. rehabilitation, reintegration). The fourth type is what Wolfensberger (1980) referred to as normalisation. He defined normalisation as ‘the use of culturally valued means in order to enable people to live culturally valued lives’ (Wolfensberger, 1980, p.13). In other words, normalisation is the ‘reversal of deviancy’ and
‘is not necessarily moral or immoral’ (Wolfensberger 1980, p.13). This definition is open to whoever is the agent of normalisation. Both stigmatised people and mainstream society could be agents of normalisation.

In cases where stigmatised people themselves engage in normalising their status, we come close to what Goffman (1963) called ‘stigma management’. Stigma management is a process through which stigmatised people try to find an accepted status in society. Goffman (1963) explained various strategies taken by stigmatised people to manage their interactions with normal people. Depending on whether the stigma is visible (e.g. race, gender, age, disability) or invisible (e.g. religious affiliation and sexual orientation), they draw on separate strategies. They may conceal stigma or fabricate a false identity. Clair, Beatty and MacLean (2005) explored how invisible stigmata are managed in workplaces. They revealed that stigmatised people might take on normalising strategies through which they attempt ‘to make their difference seem commonplace or ordinary’ (2005, p.83). They defined normalising strategy as the following: ‘The invisible social identity is subtly acknowledged, but its significance and stigma are minimized. Thus, normalizing represents attempts by an individual to establish, maintain, or pretend to be living as “normal” an existence as possible’ (2005, p.83). In other words, they downplay the significance of stigma by claiming that it is commonplace and ordinary.

Normalisation is one among several possible responses that stigmatised people could choose. Normalisation presupposes the acceptance by the stigmatised of the dominant definition of what normal is. However, the stigmatised might challenge the dominant definitions of normal and seek to change the definition. Clair, Beatty, and MacLean (2005, p.83) referred to this strategy as differentiation: ‘Those who differentiate seek to present an identity as equally valid (rather than stigmatized) and may engage in an effort to change the perceptions and behaviour of the groups, organisations, and institutions that might stigmatize them’. There are many examples of social movements (e.g. gay rights, black rights, disability advocacy) that have not accepted the need to adapt to the dominant normative systems and have strived to alter the definition. These attempts have always faced resistance from society’s dominant institutions, which exercise power to control people and shape their practices and beliefs in accordance with the norms.
Foucault (1995), in his influential book *Discipline and Punish*, argued that ‘disciplinary power’ has joined the power of law and tradition in modern societies since the eighteenth century. Disciplinary power is comprehensive and puts pressure on all individuals and groups to conform to norms. Normalisation, in Foucault’s view, is the instrument of this power. Normalisation is a process through which power differentiates and ranks people. It rewards those who abide by it and punishes those who resist. Disciplinary power puts five operations into play: it ‘compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it normalizes’ (Foucault 1995, p.183). Burns (1991) drew similarities between Foucault’s conception of normalisation and Goffman’s analysis in *Asylum* (Goffman 1961) and *Stigma* (Goffman 1963). He argued that both Foucault and Goffman studied how power normalises its subjects. He viewed Goffman’s conception of normalisation as a ‘small-scale’ version of Foucault’s studies:

> It is almost as if Foucault had taken up Goffman’s interpretation of the process by which organisations impose an appropriate identity on their members and expanded it into a much wider thesis about how political power is exerted in modern society. (Burns 1991, p.160)

Hence in Foucault and Goffman’s analyses normalisation is a matter of social control. It seeks to make people ‘normal’, ‘programmed’, or ‘built-in members’ (Goffman 1961, p.172). Normalisation applies through dividing and ranking people, rewarding those who conform and punishing the rebels. Normalisation as an instrument of power, I suggest, is relevant in the context of ethnicity and religion. In the next chapter, I describe western governments’ policies for the support of ‘moderate Islam’. Western states have divided Muslims into moderates and radicals, and support moderate Muslims financially and discursively. In so doing, they have sought to incorporate the moderates into the accepted and ‘normal’, and to contain the radical Muslims. They have divided Muslims, ranked them based on the dominant values (Australian values), supported and rewarded those who conformed, and excluded those who did not comply. They have sought to ‘normalise’ Muslims, in a Foucauldian sense. Normalisation, therefore, can be attempted and carried through both by stigmatised minorities themselves and by part of mainstream society. The focus in this study, though, is on minority strategies for the normalisation of their identity.
Throughout the thesis, I will touch upon the role of the state and the media in the process of normalization (Foucauldian perspective), however, the bulk of discussions relate to the Muslim outlook and their efforts to normalize their image in the Australian public sphere (Goffman’s perspective on stigma management).

Similar to other Muslim minorities in the West, Australian Muslims have been severely stigmatized in public discourses. Their cultures, religion, and traditions are often discussed negatively in media and political discourses. In the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, Muslim identity has been associated with extremism and terrorism in western public discourses. In such a political climate, Australian Muslims cannot integrate fully into mainstream society unless they come to be seen as ordinary citizens of Australia. Policies for the improvement of socio-economic conditions are necessary. Nevertheless, recognition of Muslims’ culture and religion is also essential to the integration of Australian Muslims into broader society. Normalisation, then, is the process through which Muslim identity comes to be recognised, respected, and seen as normal and Australian.

Muslims have migrated in mass numbers to almost all western countries, particularly Europe, in the post-war period. In Australia, the Muslim population is only 2.21 per cent (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012a), but the population is very young and is growing fast. According to the 2011 census, over one-third of Muslims are Australian-born. In such circumstances, the demonising public discourse about Islam alienates Australian Muslims and is likely to produce social confrontations and conflicts. Furthermore, with globalisation, international migration and communication technologies, Muslims worldwide are more connected to each other. Western governments have developed policies towards their Muslim minorities largely based around national security concerns. All these have led to the emergence of a ‘globalized Islam’ (Roy 2004). In such a political climate, Muslim-related issues in a western country often include international dimensions and impact on Muslim minorities in other societies. Therefore, social harmony and cohesion require the recognition and normalization of Muslim identity in the Australian public sphere.
CONCLUSION

This chapter has delved into aspects of social integration and its definition. The term social integration has been deployed differently across governmental and academic sectors. The dominant framework for explaining social integration has been functionalism, where socio-economic integration has been the prime focus. In this framework, culture does not play a large role. This is partly because, in Durkheim’s view, culture is the foundation of society. Common moral systems, norms and values are what he asserted hold society together. The collapse of this common value system creates anomic situations. This framework needs to be reworked in the context of contemporary multicultural societies where multiple cultures and value systems live side by side. In modern societies, culture has become a system of social stratification and a basis for social exclusion.

Multiculturalism and assimilation are two broad theories that have dealt with the issue of social cohesion in the face of cultural diversity, albeit with completely different perspectives. Assimilationism supports cultural homogeneity of society and argues that it leads to high levels of social trust and social capital. Therefore culturally-homogenous societies produce a sense of community which feeds into social cohesion, social order, and economic prosperity. In contrast, multiculturalism defends the role of recognition in the maintenance of social harmony and social cohesion. Multiculturalism theory does not see any tension between retaining both ethnic and national identities. In both these theories, the issue of cultural diversity is linked to social cohesion and social integration. In modern multicultural societies any conception of social integration has to consider the role of culture and identity. This implies the inadequacy of socio-economic integration theories, which are mainly concerned with labour markets and social services.

Social integration can be defined as a normalisation process for stigmatised identities. Negatively-valued cultural groups can be integrated through a normalisation of their identity. In this process, they come to be viewed as normal groups and part of mainstream society. The normalisation process may be facilitated and carried through by the stigmatised group itself or enforced by segments of mainstream society. In the first case, the notion of stigma management introduced by Goffman (1963) can be used to explain the process. In the second case, Foucault’s (1995) conception of normalisation as an instrument
of disciplinary power is a good explanatory concept. In this study, the focus is on the efforts and strategies taken on by the stigmatised groups to normalise their image and status in society.

Normalisation is a useful concept for explaining the process of Australian Muslims’ integration into broader society. Australian Muslims have been stigmatised in the public arena through being associated with backwardness, extremism, terrorism and so on. These portrayals and discourses have alienated a segment of Muslim youth and inhibited them in identifying with Australia (IDA 2007). In the long run, this mistrust may cause confrontations and conflicts. Sustainable social cohesion requires the normalisation of Muslim identity in Australian public discourses.
CHAPTER THREE: AUSTRALIAN MUSLIMS AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the extant literature on the social integration of Australian Muslims into wider society. The chapter includes three sections. First, the historical and ideological construction of Islam in the West is examined. Said’s (1978) *Orientalism* is the framework through which the ideological construction of Islam as stagnant, violent, and pre-modern is explained. This construction has placed Muslims outside the space of ‘normal’ in Australia. The construction of Muslims as backward and stagnant not only exists in western political and media discourses, but also in the work of key sociologists such as Weber, Marx, and de Tocqueville. Following Roy (2011a, p.91), I argue that there is a ‘theological bias’ in western political discourses about Muslims and Islam. This bias has led to the downplaying of political and economic factors in shaping Muslims’ lives and behaviours.

In the second section, the role of two key institutions, the state and the media, is examined *vis-à-vis* social integration. Following the September 11 attacks, Muslims have come to be seen throughout the West through a national security prism. Western governments’ policies towards their Muslim minorities have been greatly homogenised in response to the perceived threat of terrorism (Roy 2004). In Australia, the ‘securitisation’ of Muslims is evident in the National Action Plan (NAP) developed by the Howard government.

The literature on media representations of Islam is also reviewed in this section. There is a consensus that media images of Muslims are lopsided and unfair. However, there is not a consensus as to why the media misrepresent Muslims. Reasons discussed include Orientalism, the commercial nature of the media, and the power differential between the mainstream majority and minorities.

In the third section, I discuss Australian Muslim leadership. First, I provide a definition of leadership based on social identity theory. Then I offer a classification of Muslim leaders based on their discourses of social integration of Muslims with broader society: integrationist, isolationist and radical Muslim leaders. I also provide examples of these Muslim leaders and groups in the Australian context.
Muslims in Australia: background information

Muslim settlement predates White settlement in Australia. The first arrival of Muslims in Australia goes back to the seventeenth century. Macassan fishermen from the Indonesian island of Macassar, were the first Muslims to arrive on the north and west Australian coasts and to make relationships with Aboriginal people. They married Aboriginals and left their impact on Aboriginal culture. Aboriginal cave paintings show an influence of the Macassans on Aboriginal culture and language (Kabir 2004, p.3).

The second phase was in the nineteenth century when Afghan cameleers were brought over from the British colonies to help explore central Australia. Afghan camel drivers contributed to the establishment of the telegraph and inland mining. However, with the development of railroads, the need for cameleers declined (Cleland 2001, p.12). The most recent phase was the mass migration of Muslims, mainly in the post-war period after the abolishment of the White Australia Policy. Turkish labourers and Lebanese refugees were the first Muslim groups to arrive in the 1970s and 1980s. These two groups are the largest Muslim ethnic groups in Australia. Since then, Muslims have immigrated to Australia from all over the world and have built highly diverse communities.

The Muslim population has grown fast in the last decades, from 200,885 in 1996, 280,435 in 2001 and 340,392 in 2006 to 476,290 in 2011 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, 2012). This shows a growth rate of 35 per cent, 21 per cent, and 39 per cent in each five-year period respectively. According to the 2011 census, Muslims comprise 2.21 per cent of the population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012a). The majority of Muslims (78 per cent) live in the two states of New South Wales and Victoria. Over one third (37.5 per cent) of Muslims are Australian born. Although the general population is aging, the Muslim population is very young: 57 per cent are under 29 and 20.8 per cent are under 9 years old.

The Australian Muslim population is highly educated in comparison with non-Muslims; nonetheless, the unemployment rate of Muslims is high. Hassan (2009, p.1), carried out an analysis of the 2006 census and reported findings as follows:
21 per cent of adult Muslim men have a university degree compared with 15 per cent of non-Muslim Australians, yet their age specific unemployment rates are two to four times higher than those of non-Muslim Australians. On other indicators of socioeconomic well-being they fall into a very disadvantaged category. For example, their rate of home ownership is half the national average; 40 per cent of Muslim children are living in poverty, which is twice the Australian average; only 25 per cent of Muslim households have above-average household income while the corresponding figure for non-Muslim household is 34 per cent.

This pattern has persisted in the 2011 census. For instance, 13 per cent of Australians earn less than 199 dollars per week while this number for Muslims is 20 per cent (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012a).

Australian Muslims, similar to other Muslim communities in the West, have been ostracised and demonised in local media and political discourses. Several media studies have documented the distorted and unfair representations of Muslims (e.g. Brasted 2001; Kabir 2006; Manning 2006; Sohrabi & Farquharson 2012). Public opinion polls reveal the prevalence of negative attitudes towards Muslims. A bipartisan federal parliamentary inquiry about Australia’s acceptance of cultural diversity reported that ‘the largest issue facing the nation is the acceptance of Muslims, who many Australians fear have an agenda not at one with the country’s values’ (Karvelas 2012). Labor MP, Ms Vamvakinou, chair of the inquiry, said that

Clearly, there is a belief among some people that there is a worldwide agenda for Islamists to bring their values into Australia. There is a view that multiculturalism is a way for Muslims to come in and impose their views under the guise of multiculturalism. (Karvelas 2012)

A decade-long national survey (n=12,500), conducted by the University of Western Sydney, revealed that almost half (48.6 per cent) the Australian population hold anti-Muslim sentiments (Dunn et al. 2008). These results show that Muslims are not considered to be ‘normal’ Australian citizens. Rather, they are seen as a menace to Australia. Negative public attitudes towards Australian Muslims are bound up with their perceptions about
Islam and Muslim culture. The socio-economic conception of integration does not account for this widespread negativity. These ill-disposed perceptions are largely linked to the ideological construction of Islam in the West. Social integration of Muslims, to be successful, needs a reformulation of this ideological construction. Unless Islam and Muslim identity are respected and recognised, Australian Muslims cannot fully integrate into mainstream society.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF ISLAM IN THE WEST

The relationship between Islam and the West, particularly Europe, has historically been turbulent. The Crusades of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries form the backdrop of this relationship. The confrontations and wars between the Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe prevailed for centuries and continued until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War. Subsequently, European powers dominated the Middle East and North Africa militarily, economically and politically. Nonetheless, the Middle East has remained a resistant region—as Kepel (2008, p.276) referred to it, the ‘planet’s nerve center’—in the twentieth century. In the second half of the twentieth century, tensions between Israel and Arab countries (largely over Palestine) have maintained the Middle East as a focus of western governments. Most recently, the September 11 attacks brought the Islam-West relationship to the forefront of the global stage. Now the question is whether this history adequately explains why the Christian West has ‘singled out the Islamic world as its particular demon’ (Wallerstein 1999, p.110).

Wallerstein (1999) held that apart from religious rivalry between Christianity and Islam, there are political and economic reasons behind the Islam-West conflicts. In line with his world system theory, Wallerstein suggested that European colonial expansion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries bypassed the Middle East. Europeans went westward to reach India but found the Americas. They also circumvented the Middle East by going to Africa to reach Asia. This was because Europeans believed the colonisation of Asia would be easier than the Middle East: ‘The Islamic world seemed a hard nut to crack, particularly at that moment, at the height of Ottoman power’ (1999, p.110). Wallerstein claimed that
European powers succeeded finally in turning almost the entire world into either colonies or semi-colonies. In the twentieth century, the principal conflicts were between Europeans and the areas which had been semi-colonised: the Soviet Union, China (and North Korea), and the Islamic world. The first two, Wallerstein maintained, are no longer an enemy, and what remains is Islam, which is: ‘a demon much discussed and much feared in the West, but essentially an imprecise construct representing a blurred vision of reality’ (Wallerstein 1999, p.112). The roots of this ‘blurred vision of reality’ have been comprehensively discussed by Said (1978).

Drawing on Foucault’s studies of discursive formations, Said (1978) argued that the knowledge of Islam and Muslims in the West has been shaped against a backdrop of power and domination. The conquest of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798, Said claimed, was the beginning of ‘modern’ imperialism. Before that, conquests were limited to political, economic, and military domination. However, Napoleon took with him a large team of scientists such as architects, philologists, biologists, historians. These scientists’ task was to explore and study Egypt in every aspect, and they did. They produced many books about Egypt, but they were not for Egyptians, but for Europeans. Said maintained that there was not comparable research on Europe by Egyptians. European scientists’ power, prestige and pride were embedded into the fabric of the knowledge produced by them.

Said extended his argument to other encounters between Europeans and the ‘oriental’ which, he suggested, led to the emergence of an organised body of knowledge that he called Orientalism. This knowledge was generally produced from a ‘position of dominance’ and ‘cultural antipathy’ (Said 1981, p.155) and for the purpose of control and domination. Inherent in this knowledge was the ideological construction of the orient as inferior.

Through his studies of the vast literature of Orientalism over a long period of time, Said (1978) asserted that Orientalism is more consistent with itself than with the realities of the orient. That is, the orient as pictured in Orientalist studies seems to be somewhere outside history and does not change. Said claimed that the literature of Orientalism in the nineteenth century does not differ significantly from that of the twentieth century. Moreover, he argued that what is said about India in Orientalist literature is similar to what
is said about Egypt, as if the orient were a single entity. Said summarised the four ‘dogmas’ of Orientalism as follows:

One is the absolute and scientific difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior. Another dogma is that abstractions about the Orient, particularly those based on texts representing ‘classical’ Oriental civilisation, are always preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities. A third dogma is that the Orient is eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining itself; therefore it is assumed that a highly generalized and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint is inevitable and even scientifically ‘objective’. A fourth dogma is that the Orient is at bottom something either to be feared (the Yellow Peril, the Mongol hordes, the brown dominion) or to be controlled (by pacification, research and development, outright occupation whenever possible. (Said 2003, p. 300-301)

These dogmas not only exist in western political and media discourses but are also shared by key sociological figures. In the following, I demonstrate how Orientalism has permeated the work of sociologists. I accompany the discussion with examples from contemporary Australian political and media discourses about Muslims and Islam.

One of the key points in the construction of Islam in the West is that Islam is not only a religion and faith, it is a ‘socio-political system’ (Turner 1991, p.20). In other words, Islam goes far beyond regulating the spiritual relationship between man and God, but instructs in the regulation of social institutions, politics, law, and the economy. Gellner (1981, p.1), in his book *Muslim Society*, claimed that ‘Islam is a blue print of social order’; it contains eternal and divine rules ‘which define the proper ordering of society’. Alexis de Tocqueville (1840, p.792) claimed the same by comparing Islam with Christianity:

Mohammad professed to derive from heaven, and he has inserted in the Koran, not only a body of religious doctrines, but political maxims, civil and criminal laws, and theories of science. The gospel, on the contrary, only speaks of the general relations of men to God and to each other, beyond which it inculcates and imposes no point of faith. This alone, besides a thousand other reasons, would suffice to prove that
the former of these religions will never long predominate in a cultivated and
democratic age, whilst the latter is destined to retain its sway at these as at all other
periods.

De Tocqueville, however, did not explain the relationship between the comprehensive
doctrines of Islam and being ‘cultivated’. Neither did he unpack the content of the ‘a
thousand other reasons’, quoted above. Moreover, de Tocqueville claimed that Islamic
social and political teachings are antithetical to progress, modernity and democracy. He
claimed that the abstention of Christianity from interfering into public issues paves the way
for social change and progress. Whether or not this reading of Christianity complies with
the Church’s history, this belief is prevalent in the West: stagnant Islam versus the
progressive West. This view prevails in contemporary western anti-Islam discourses.
Australian Christian theologian, Mark Durie (2010), who has written extensively about
Islam, contended that:

One is that Muhammad combined within himself the offices of king, judge, general
and religious leader, thus unifying politics, law, the military and religion. To follow
his example means creating a theocratic political order where the laws of the land
are controlled by Islamic theology.

Here we see the portrayal of Islam as a socio-political entity. This view, that Islamic
doctrines are the fundamental organising principle of Muslims’ lives, forms the basis of
western discourses about Muslims. Said (1981) deconstructed the dichotomy of Islam-West
and explained why Islam is often compared with the West, and not with Christianity:

The assumption is that whereas “the West” is greater than and has surpassed the
stage of Christianity, its principal religion, the world of Islam -its varied societies,
histories, and languages notwithstanding- is still mired in religion, primitivity, and
backwardness. Therefore the West is modern, greater than the sum of its parts, full
of enriching contradictions and yet always “Western” in its cultural identity: the
world of Islam, on the other hand, is not more than “Islam” reducible to a small
number of unchanging characteristics despite the appearance of contradictions and
experiences of variety that seem on the surface to be as plentiful as those of the West. (Said 1981, p.10)

This notion of stagnant orient is also reflected in Marxist literature. Marx (1973) asserted that oriental societies lacked the essential elements of social change, namely class structure. Marx described Eastern societies as despotic due to the role of the state in controlling irrigation systems. The consequent mode of production (the Asiatic mode of production) concentrated the power within the state and did not allow for the formation of social classes as the agents of social change (Marx 1973). Engels argued that social changes that took place in Muslim societies were fused with Islam and guised economic elements. To account for social change, which did occur in Muslim societies, Engels asserted that the changes were cyclical Islamic revivals that recurred every other century without any progress (Engels 1894-5). This pre-modern stagnant ‘bloc’ was also perceived to be a menace to the modern West.

Muslims have been painted as people who are going to take over other societies by means of violence. This is evident in the Orientalist literature. For instance, Weber described Islam as a ‘conquering’ religion. He provided a ‘formula’ to characterise the first carriers of world religions:

If one wishes to characterize briefly, in a formula so to speak, the types representative of the strata that were the primary carriers or propagators of the so-called world religions, they would be the following: in Confucianism, the world-organizing bureaucrat; in Hinduism, the world-ordering magician; in Buddhism, the world-wandering monk; in Islam, the world-conquering warrior; in Judaism, the wandering trader; and in Christianity, the itinerant crafts-person (Weber 1965, p.132).

This image of Islam as a religion which seeks to conquer and impose itself on others is widespread in contemporary discourses about Islam. In 2006, Pope Benedict XVI (2006) delivered a lecture that triggered massive debates in Muslim and Christian circles. In his lecture, the Pope cited a sentence from the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus in which the spread of Islam was associated with ‘sword’ which was ‘evil’ and ‘inhumane’.
The Pope retreated later and said he just quoted the words and that was not his own position.

Obviously, the emergence of new Jihadi organisations such as Al-Qaeda has intensified this image of Islam. Apart from terrorism, a number of violent protests in the West such as the Salman Rushdie affair and the Mohammad Cartoons have contributed to the image of Islam as intolerant and violent. In 1989, Salman Rushdie, a British Indian writer, wrote a novel titled The Satanic Verses which was perceived blasphemous by many Muslims and led to protests in Britain as well as Muslim countries. Imam Khomeini, the supreme leader of Iran, inflamed the protests by his fatwa on the execution of Rushdie. Subsequently, the protests turned violent in Britain and Rushdie was in hiding for twelve years (Ahmedi, 2007). In another event, a Danish newspaper published caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in 2005 depicting him as a terrorist. This led to demonstrations by Muslims in Denmark and some Muslim countries and led to an international conflict (Klausen 2009).

The engagement with violence in domestic political affairs in the current political framework of western capitalism displaces the perpetrators to the political margin and is ‘powerfully stigmatized’ (Hall 1993, p.272). This notion of ‘conquering’ and ‘taking over’ is an important element of anti-Islamic discourses in Australia. In 2011, three Liberal senators tabled a petition to impose a ten-year ban on Muslim immigration to Australia and to prioritise Christian immigrants. In the petition they wrote:

Adopt a ten year moratorium on Muslim immigration, so an assessment can be made on the social and political disharmony currently occurring in the Netherlands, France, and US, so as to ensure we avoid making the same mistakes; and allow a decade for the Muslim leadership and community in Australia to reassess their situation so as to reject any attempt to establish a Muslim nation with our Australian nation. (Farmer 2011)

This quote presupposes sameness of Muslims in Australia, the US, the Netherlands and France, no matter what their ethnic, sectarian, or socio-economic differences might be. Islamic teachings are taken as a homogenous body that shapes the lives of whoever carries the name of Islam. The mere fact of being Muslim amounts to having an agenda for
establishing a Muslim nation in Australia. Senator Cory Bernadi (2011b) reiterated this claim by saying that ‘their [Muslims’] ultimate goal is not simply to “punish the west”, it is to claim this nation for Islam and implement Shari’a (or Islamic) law’. It was not explained why Muslims want to ‘punish the West’. Similarly, the Christian Democratic Party, when inviting Australian citizens to answer the voluntary census question about religious affiliation, stated that:

This is particularly important with the significant growth of the Muslim religion in Sydney’s Western Suburbs, because many Muslims want to claim Australia as an Islamic State. (Nile 2011)

This is also evident in discourses about asylum seekers who come by boat to Australia. The passing of borders by asylum seekers, a segment of them Muslims, is portrayed as taking over Australia. Many of these misconceptions, as Said (1981) argued, are rooted in the ideological construction of Islam in the West. This construction, Said claimed, prioritises the investigation of religious texts, such as the Quran, rather than the current realities of Islamic societies. The fact that the Quran became a best-selling book in the United States in the aftermath of September 11 exemplifies this point (USA Today 2001). To understand why Al-Qaeda blew up the twin towers, people refer to an Islamic text to find the explanation. In Australia, Durie (2010) has authored a book of 288 pages to explain the concept of Dhimmitude in Islamic texts and to show how terrifying it is for non-Muslims. There is no mention of research to show how many Muslims have even heard of this concept.

Similarly, Australian Senator Bernadi (2011a) claimed that ‘Islam itself is the problem—it's not Muslims … Muslims are individuals that practise their faith in their own way, but Islam is a totalitarian, political and religious ideology’. In a similar fashion, Greg Sheridan (2011), a columnist for The Australian, listed problems in the western suburbs of Sydney (extremism, violence, misogyny and the like) and asked whether they have anything to do with Islam: ‘does Islam itself have a role in these problems? The answer is complex and nuanced but it must be a qualified, and deeply reluctant, yes’. This framing of the issue carries its own solution. There is no way to solve the Muslim ‘problem’ unless Muslims
come to ‘re-examine … texts and articulate a path for how one can accept pluralism and modernity—and still be a passionate, devout Muslim’ (Friedman 2001). This is what Roy (2011a) called a ‘theological bias’ in discourses about Islam and Muslims. The construction of Islam in the West as a stagnant, backward, anti-modern, violent, and conquering religion has another important element: the position of women in Islam and Muslim cultures.

Women’s position in Islam has caused one of the most heated debates in the West in recent years. Muslim women are depicted in public discourses as oppressed. Muslim women’s clothes such as the scarf and burqa are taken as evidence of the unequal status of men and women in Islam (Gole 1996; Prins & Slijper 2002). French legislation on the ban of scarves in schools and the burqa in public spaces illustrates this point. In Australia, the burqa has come to public attention recently. The opposition leader, Tony Abbott, described it as ‘confronting’ (Herald Sun 2010). More recently, polygamy, Islamic marriage and divorce laws have been the subject of TV shows and programs (Australian Broadcasting Corporation Television 2012; SBS 2012). The focus on Muslim women in anti-Islamic discourses needs to be put in the broader social and political context of western societies.

Since the 1970s and with the rise of feminism, sexual freedom has become an important element of western culture. It is strongly associated with liberalism, individualism and secularism (Scott 2007). Sexual freedom in the West is understood as a component of modernity and progress. It has become a dominant ‘norm’. In some countries, such as the Netherlands, tolerance of homosexuality has even become part of national identity (Mepschen, Duyvendak & Tonkens 2010). The portrayal of Muslims as being against sexual freedom intensifies the picture of them as ‘backward’. The association of Muslim cultures with misogyny (and homophobia in some countries such as the Netherlands) has caused trouble for progressives in reconciling anti-racism with anti-patriarchy/anti-homophobia (Butler 2008; Mepschen, Duyvendak & Tonkens 2010). This is to say that progressive movements support minority rights to maintain their culture, traditions, and religion. At the same time, they are critical of the unequal treatment of men and women. These two positions have become difficult to reconcile in the case of some Muslim communities in the West. Having said that, to an extent the issue of women has been exploited instrumentally to marginalise Muslim minorities (Butler 2008).
In sum, Muslims have been discursively situated outside the space of ‘normal’ in western societies. It seems that there is a great deal of consensus among western schools of thought about Islam, despite their massive diversity. As Said (1981, p.xv) put it:

For the right, Islam represents barbarism; for the left, medieval theocracy; for the center, a kind of distasteful 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 there.

The accumulation of negative features assigned to Muslims has rendered Muslim minorities and their culture incompatible with and stigmatised by the West. Wolfensberger (1980, p.14) argued that ‘as deviances and stigmata increase in number, severity, or variety, they tend to have a multiplicative rather than additive image upon observers’. It seems that Muslims possess all the potential to be a threatening other to the West. The dichotomies of progressive/stagnant, modern/pre-modern, egalitarian/patriarchal and civilised/violent have paved the way for the exclusion of Islam and Muslims from what is considered ‘normal’ in the West.

Orientalist discourses are essentially culturalist. Roy (2004, p.15) stated that a culturalist approach considers culture as ‘a fairly homogenous set of values’. He claimed that ‘most culturalist approaches fail because they are ‘downplaying a centuries-old history of civil wars, Kulturkampf and ideological conflicts’ (2004, p.15). Huntington’s (1993) thesis on the clash of civilisation is an example of a culturalist approach. Huntington viewed the world as being divided into several civilisational blocks whose conflicts will shape the international politics in the post-Cold War era. In particular, he argued that Islamic civilisation will come into confrontation with western civilisation in this new political era. In response, Said (2001) claimed that the conflicts within civilisations are stronger than clashes between them. Orientalism is culturalist because it does not account for the diversity of Muslims and their cultures and underplays the importance of political and economic factors in shaping Muslims’ lives and practices.
AUSTRALIAN MUSLIMS, STATE AND THE MEDIA

The state and the media are two key institutions as far as social integration of migrants is concerned. Any conception of the state would assign it an important role in the maintenance of social order and stability. By definition, the state has the exclusive right to use violence for the maintenance of social order (Weber 1978). States possess the important resources of money, power, and information to implement their policies. In particular, welfare states such as Australia are very influential in structuring social classes and communities. The media is also a key institution vis-à-vis social integration.

The public sphere is foundational to a democratic society. It is a sphere where social and political issues are discussed in order to reach agreement, find solutions, and improve the state of affairs (Habermas 1989). In modern democracies, the public sphere is largely mediated. Jakubowicz (2007, p.169) suggested that the media could undermine social cohesion through four processes: marginalisation, stereotyping, demobilisation, and fragmentation. He claimed that the media could also have positive effects and ‘strengthen social ties both within and across groups’ (p.169). He asserted that the media is ‘both part of the problem of social cohesion and part of the potential solution’ (p.169). The role of state policies and media representations in relation to Australian Muslim communities constitutes a large segment of the entire literature on Australian Muslims.

States and the securitisation of Muslims

The Australian government has adopted multiculturalism as its official policy since the early 1970s. The policy requires the recognition and equal treatment of ethnic and religious groups in all spheres of society (Office of Multicultural Affairs 1989). This is related to liberalism as a political ideology in which the state should remain impartial to ‘the conception of the good’ and cultural and religious worldviews of social groups (Rawls 2005, p.19). Nonetheless, as Kymlicka (1995) argued, states cannot differentiate themselves from ethnicity, the way they do with religion. This is because states have to adopt a language, determine public holidays, and have other particularities which are often
associated with the majority ethnic group in a democracy. Consequently, the unequal status of the majority and minorities would continue even in a multicultural democratic society. Hage (1998) asserted that Australian multiculturalism did not eliminate White supremacy but reinforced it. He differentiated between ‘multiculturalism of being’ and ‘multiculturalism of having’, suggesting that:

While the former establishes a unified Australian “we” where Whites and non-Whites fuse in a “consubstantial state of being”, the latter always established an extrinsic relation between a White possessor and non-White possessed’. (Hage 1998, p.140)

Hage (1998) claimed that the Australian model is the ‘multiculturalism of having’ where Whites dominate politics, media, art, the economy, and sport. The notions of ‘tolerance’ and ‘recognition’, Hage (1998) contended, reproduce the unequal status of Whites and non-Whites. They are Whites who can tolerate non-Whites and not vice versa. The centrality of White culture is embedded in the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia (Office of Multicultural Affairs 1989), the key Australian document on multiculturalism. It asserted that ‘our British heritage is extremely important to us. It helps to define us as Australian’.

This definition has led Australia’s foreign policy to be closely allied with other white nations across the world, and this is evident in the Australian government’s involvement in the War on Terror (Osuri & Banerjee 2004). Until 2000, according to the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), Australia was not a target of terrorism and ‘terrorist attacks in Australia were directed primarily against the interests of other countries’ (Australian Security Intelligence Organisation 2006). Nonetheless, Australia fully participated in the War on Terror and took part in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. The Australian government also developed very similar policies to the United States and European states for the control and containment of Australian Muslim communities. Australian Muslims, like other Muslim minorities in the West, have come to be increasingly viewed through the lens of national security.

Roy (2004) claimed that the policies of western governments towards their Muslim minorities were greatly homogenised after the September 11 attacks. European states have
developed numerous policies in response to terrorist attacks in the United States and Europe. In these policies, the common theme is that Muslim minorities are national security issues. Cesari (2010, p.21) held that Muslims in Europe have been severely ‘securitised’ by the initiation of laws such as easier deportation of radical Muslims, monitoring or recording electronic transactions, indefinite detention of suspects, expanding police authority to stop vehicles and search premises, and restrictions on immigration and refugee intakes. These measures have had ‘a disproportionate effect on Muslims’ (Cesari 2010, p.21). Similarly, Haddad and Blaz (2008) argued that in response to the threat of terrorism, European governments have increased their surveillance of Muslim minorities by enhancing the police authority as well as harmonising the European Union immigration policies. What these policies have in common is that Islam is not treated as a faith, but as having a threatening political element in need of containment.

Humphrey (2010, p.56) argued that the securitisation of Muslims is bound up with globalisation. He claimed that: ‘the securitising of Islam with the globalisation of terrorism has transformed Islam and Muslims in the West from the status of immigrant community or minority to an object for policing and management’. He suggested that globalisation has allowed international terrorist networks to work efficiently. In response, a ‘transnational governmentality’ has emerged in the West to trace and neutralise terrorist networks (2010, p.69). This is evident, he held, in similar policies of western governments for curbing Muslim radicals. Humphrey (2010) asserted that state policies for social inclusion and integration of Muslims have to be viewed through the agenda of controlling Muslim minorities. Social inclusion policies in the West, he said, purport to ‘domesticate’ Muslim minorities by interfering in community leadership structures and by the constant policing of Muslim communities. The support for western-friendly Muslim leaders, the so-called ‘moderate Muslims’, has been an integral part of the control and co-optation of Muslim communities.

In the wake of the September 11 attacks, western governments have devised many policies to promote ‘moderate Islam’. In the US, for instance, former Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz called for an ‘Islamic reformation’ (Lobe 2004). The RAND Corporation, an American neo-conservative think tank, recommended that the US government take an
active role in building networks of moderate Muslims around the world (Rabasa et al. 2007). The basic premise of the RAND proposal was that the US government should support moderate Muslim networks in order to contain extremism. Rabasa et al. (2007) contended that extremist organisations have established their networks both in Muslim majority countries and the West. However, there have not been parallel moderate Muslim networks to counter and contain them. The ‘building blocks’ of moderate networks, they maintained, are ‘liberal and secular Muslim academics and intellectuals, young moderate religious scholars, community activists, women’s groups engaged in gender equality campaigns, moderate journalists and writers’ (Rabasa et al. 2007, p.xxii).

European governments have taken similar approaches in promoting moderate Islam. Haddad and Golson (2007) claimed that with the rise of security concerns in Europe in the last decade, European governments have brought their policies towards Muslim minorities into harmony. European states, they claimed, have gone beyond the ‘quick-fix solutions of crackdown on Islamic militants and tightened immigration controls’, and have moved towards ‘repositioning the state as arbiter and chief architect of a “moderate” European Islam’ (p.488). For the European states ‘the question is no longer how to help Muslims feel at home in foreign societies, but how to ensure that these societies produce the right kind of Muslims’ (Haddad & Golson 2007, p.488). Haddad and Balz (2008, p.215) suggested that European governments attempt to curb radical Islam through ‘highly-visible deportations, demonstrations of support for pro-government Muslim leaders, and infiltration of mosques and Muslim communities as well as sponsoring programs to train Euro-friendly Imams’.

Similarly, Glynn (2008) examined the British government’s plans to support moderate Islam. She argued that the government’s measures have not been limited to sponsoring certain Muslims and leaders but have ‘encroached on the development of Islam itself’ (p.4). She said that the British government has utilised immigration law to ensure that Imams who come to Britain have a reasonable level of skill in English, and that it also funds universities to teach moderate versions of Islamic studies.

In Australia, the promotion of moderate Muslim leadership was apparent in the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security (NAP) in 2005. Following the London Bombing, then Prime Minister John Howard invited a selected number of
Muslim community leaders for consultation on Islamic radicalism. The NAP was a result of that meeting, and it emphasised the role of community and faith leaders in promoting Australian values and ruling out radicalisation in Muslim communities (Ministerial Council on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2006). The group was named the ‘Muslim Reference Group’. Howard instructed them that Muslim schools should teach ‘Australian values’ (Poynting & Mason 2008).

The Muslim Reference Group facilitated the establishment of the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC), a group of about 100 Imams from all states. The ANIC supported the Howard Citizenship Test initiative and encouraged all Australian Imams to deliver their sermons in English (Poynting & Mason 2007, p.238). Under the NAP, the Australian government also developed cultural training for religious workers who come to Australia in order to educate them about Australian culture (Wall 2011).

Kevin Andrews (2007), ex-Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, affirmed that in the National Action Plan, social cohesion was defined in connection with national security. He suggested that the NAB aimed to ‘address the underlying causes of extremism, including the social and economic factors that encourage radicalisation and motivate extremist behaviour’ (Andrews 2007, p.55). He pointed out that the key areas of the NAP were ‘improving understanding of extremism, building leadership capacity in Australian Muslim communities, promoting non-violent interpretations of Islam in Australia, encouraging mutual respect, and actively engaging with Australian Muslim communities’. The quote reveals that the government favours and supports moderate views of Islam over others. This, however, violates the basic principle of a secular state that is impartial vis-à-vis the internal divisions of religious institutions.

The selective make-up of the Muslim Reference Group revealed the government’s agenda for building a pro-government Muslim leadership. There was no representative from the Turkish community in the Group. This was dubious because Turkish Muslims constitute the second-largest Muslim ethnic group in Australia. Akbarzadeh and Roose (2011, p.321) asserted that it was because Turkish Muslims were less ‘political and dangerous’. The establishment of the Group was interpreted by some critics as state intervention into
religious groups for taming Muslim communities (Humphrey 2010). Poynting and Mason (2008, p.238) went further and claimed that the appointment of the Muslim Reference Group had nothing to do with ‘dialogue’, but it was ‘to obtain intelligence for security services’ in the War on Terror and ‘to co-opt the communities into collaboration with security officers and police through informing on an ongoing basis’.

The hyper-concern of the state with Australian Muslims was not limited to the Howard government, but has been evident in the Labor government’s policies since 2007. The Counter-Terrorism White Paper: “Securing Australia, Protecting Our Community”, developed by the Rudd government, is a notable example. The Paper indicated that ‘the main source of international terrorism and the primary terrorist threat to Australia and Australian interests is from a global violent Jihadist movement’ (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2010, p.ii). The Paper then highlighted a shift from international terrorism to home-grown terrorism. More recently, the Gillard government allocated 10 million dollars to combat extremism in North Melbourne, an area with a high concentration of Muslims, and this has triggered criticism (Masanauskas 2012).

Security concerns over Muslims are also evident in anti-terrorism laws. The Australian government has reacted to terrorism more vigorously than the United States and United Kingdom by establishing fully fledged anti-terrorism laws. Williams (2011) asserted that in the decade following the September 11 attacks, Parliament passed 54 anti-terrorism laws, and this exceeds the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada. He noted that Australian anti-terrorism laws would be ‘unthinkable’ in countries such as the United States and Canada due to their restrictions on freedom of speech. He argued that some aspects of the laws apply exclusively to Muslims, which might trigger reactions. Similarly, Hocking (2007) claimed that the anti-terrorism laws and their tremendous reach have transformed Australian domestic law so that it is ‘creating an effective second tier of quasi-judicial process outside the established criminal justice system’. She argued that even though these laws are not discriminatory ‘on their face’, it is likely that they are applied in a discriminatory way and lead to the racial profiling of Muslims (p.183).
These points show that Australian Muslim communities are not considered ‘normal’ Australians. In the background to these policies, there is a deep-seated mistrust, which constructs Muslims as ‘foreigners’. The association of terrorism with Islam has essentialised the problem. The phrase ‘Islamic terrorism’ is used in both descriptive and explanatory ways (Mamdani 2004). This view simplifies the complexity of the global political and economic realities that underpin terrorism. Dominant discourses explain terrorism as part of a ‘civilisational’ conflict between Islam and the West. This framework naturally leaves little space for the integration of Muslim minorities, because they are considered to be a threatening other. These views echo Said’s argument that Orientalism takes Islam as an unchanging and eternal entity. It gives analytic precedence to culture, as opposed to economy or politics, in explaining social phenomena. Orientalist discourses explain Muslim-related issues through the lens of Islam. People who have an affiliation with Islam are nothing more than Muslim. Their behaviours are solely explained on the basis of Islam and not based on political and economic factors.

The Australian Media and the alienation of Muslims

Islam in the Australian media is often associated with fanaticism, violence, terrorism, and backwardness (e.g. Akbarzadeh & Smith 2005; Brasted 2001; Kabir 2006; Manning 2006; Rane, Ewart & Abdalla 2010; Sohrabi & Farquharson 2012). Western discourses homogenise Muslims. That is to say that no matter what the nationality or ethnicity of Muslims, their socio-economic status, sect or theological beliefs, European or African or Asian, educated or illiterate, devout or non-practicing, being Muslim has come to be associated with being ‘collectivist, authoritarian, illiberal and theocratic’ (Parekh 2005).

Brasted (2001) carried out a large-scale content analysis of the Australian print media between 1950 and 2000. He claimed that ‘in effect, Islam has been captured in a series of single snapshots of its episodic history which have spotlighted only the conflicts, charismatic leaders, and the more contentious aspects of revivalist Islam’, and ‘very rarely has this narrow view been balanced against the larger perspective of the normal, stable, social existence experienced by the vast majority of Muslims’ (Brasted 2001, p.222).
Australian Muslims are guilty by association for what happens in Europe or America. There is an increasing reference to overseas Muslim-related issues to justify local policies about Muslim minorities. The problems Europeans have with their Muslim minorities are used to criticise Australian multiculturalism (see for instance Usher (2011)). Although the September 11 attacks gave a new momentum to the demonisation of Muslims, misrepresentation of Muslims had existed in the media well before that (Brasted 2001; Poynting & Mason 2007; Muscati 2002). These pejorative discourses have negatively impacted on Muslims’ sense of belonging to their respective nations. In Australia, dissatisfaction with media images is one of the most frequent themes emerging in studies on Muslims (e.g. IDA 2007; Yasmeen 2010).

Said (1981) was one of the first to investigate western media representations of Islam in his book *Covering Islam*. Continuing his argument about Orientalism, he asserted that western media have systematically portrayed Islam and Muslim societies in a derogatory fashion: ‘it is only a slight overstatement to say that Muslims and Arabs are essentially covered, discussed, apprehended, either as oil suppliers or as potential terrorists’ (Said 1981, p.26). Said argued that Islam has often been discussed in the context of domination and confrontation in the West. This context has severely limited the capacity for westerners to gain sound knowledge about Muslims. This biased knowledge, he asserted, has permeated western politicians’, commentators’, experts’, and journalists’ discussions and commentary about Islam.

Said’s (1978) *Orientalism* has been one of the most frequently adopted frameworks for the explanation of media misrepresentations of Islam. Said (1978) argued that colonialism underpinned the abundance of work produced by western academics, commentators, journalists, and politicians about the East and Islam. This knowledge was not impartial, but served to maintain the West’s domination over the East. The will for the legitimisation of dominance necessitated ongoing degradation of the East as being backward, stagnant, and threatening. The media both consume and reinforce this historical construction of Muslims as evil and inferior.
Isakhan (2010) adopted Orientalism as the framework to explain media images of Islam. He traced back the history of Australian media representations of Muslims to the nineteenth century, claiming that Orientalist discourses emerged as early as the advent of modern media technologies and enterprises in Australia. The idea of ‘Muslim menace’ appeared in the Australian press as early as the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries (Isakhan 2010, p.21). In contrast, Brasted (2001) critiqued the adoption of Orientalism for the explanation of media discourses about Islam. He argued that Orientalism itself should be placed in historical context. Orientalism, the knowledge of the West about the East, was shaped in an era when the West was progressing technologically and the East was in decline ‘militarily, economically, culturally, and morally’ (Brasted 2001, p.210). The image of the East in this period, Brasted (2001, p.210) asserted, was as ‘a defenceless, bankrupt, illiberal, easily compromised Orient in need of European governance’. This image, then, legitimised European colonialism. Brasted (2001) asserted that the contemporary image of Islam is very different from past images. Current images portray Muslims as being ‘aggressively militant, intrinsically fundamentalist, ideologically anti-modern, and socially repressive’. This ‘new typology’ of imageries depicts Islam as ‘a civilisation to be once again taken seriously, rather than scorned’ (Brasted 2001, p.210).

Brasted (2001) promulgated another framework for explaining negative media discourses about Islam. He claimed that the modern media work in a competitive market to sell their paper and ‘what sells best is material that is dramatic, shocking and eye-catching’ (2001, p.223). He maintained that journalists are not ‘custodians’ of Orientalism, but they must follow the requirements of working in a competitive market. Therefore the media do not treat Muslims in a unique manner, but the same as every other group. The media depict the world as ‘a place of drama and tragedy’ (Brasted 2001, p.223). Similarly, Persinger (2010), based on her journalistic experience, argued that individual journalists should not be blamed for the misrepresentation of Muslims in the media. She referred to the commercial nature of the media and held that ‘factors such as competition between rival media outlets to sell papers, space constraints and pressures journalists are under to break stories that grab their editor’s attention all play a role’ (2010, p.64).
In addition to Orientalism and the commercial nature of the media, there are other explanations for distorted media images. Van Dijk (2000) contended that the media are often biased in representing ethnic affairs. He attributed this tendency to several factors. He claimed that White people have few daily communications with minorities. They receive most of their information about ethnic minorities from the media, and often lack access to other channels of information. Moreover, negative representations of minorities accord with their interests. Also, minorities have little access to mainstream media. Van Dijk (2000) held that these factors prompt the media to highlight news that degrades migrants and legitimates the existing power and status hierarchies. He said that the news of migrants who leave the country, migrants’ contribution to the economy, racism and everyday life experiences of migrants are not usually covered by the media to the extent that the news about migrants’ arrivals, crime, and cultural differences are. He concluded that ‘what we find is a preference for those topics that emphasize Their bad actions and Our good ones’ (2000, p.38).

The power differential between the majority and minorities causes an unbalanced representation in the media. In Australia, Hage (1998, p.47) argued, White supremacy is evident in the contestations over the ‘national space’. Whites, he (1998, p.233) asserted, are the ones who enjoy the exclusive ‘right to worry’ about Australia. This privileged position is reflected in media discourses. Aly (2007, p.56) held that public debates about Muslims are often ‘a conversation about Muslims, not with them’.

In recent years, there have been moves towards a more positive representation of ethnic groups in the public sphere, most evident in the case of TV channel SBS. Nonetheless, most Australian media outlets are still controlled by Whites. Over time, various groups have been demonised in the Australian media. Hage (2006) claimed that Asians were depicted as the most threatening others to Australia up until the turn of the century. Pauline Hanson’s racist discourses of the late 1990s mostly targeted Asians, not Muslims. However, Hage (2006) contended, in the last decade, Muslims have come to replace Asians as the most threatening others. The wave of derogatory images of Muslims in the media has added momentum to Muslim communities to defy these dominant perceptions and defend their faith and communities. A growing number of Muslims have become active in the
Australian public sphere to challenge and change the perceptions of mainstream Australia about Islam and Muslims.

AUSTRALIAN MUSLIM LEADERS AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Australian Muslims are fragmented along ethnic, sectarian, theological, and political lines. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a full account of the spheres of Muslim leadership. Rather I will provide a schematic classification of Muslim leadership that suits the purposes of the study. First, however, it is necessary to define the concepts of ‘leadership’ and ‘Muslims’.

Muslim leadership: a conceptual analysis

I define Australian Muslims as an identity group. Identity ‘denotes the ways in which individual and collectivities are distinguished in their relations with other individual and collectivities’ (Jenkins 2008, p.18). Social identity, then, is ‘part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership’ (Tajfel 1981, p.255 italics in the original).

This definition is appropriate to the diversity of Australian Muslim communities. Australian Muslims come from over sixty countries and differ racially, ethnically, linguistically, religiously, and politically. This significant diversity has led some people to question the very basis of using the term ‘Australian Muslims’. For instance, Aly (2007, p.199) asserted that ‘this entity, called the “Australian Muslim community”, that so regularly makes an appearance in the Australian public conversation is in fact a horrible political fiction’. I suggest that, despite the diverse fabric of Australian Muslim communities, the term can be used, albeit reflectively and cautiously. There are many organisations that represent Muslims rather than ethnic or sectarian groups (for instance, the Islamic Council of Victoria). In addition, there are many Islamic schools throughout the
country that admit Muslim students from every ethnic group. More significantly, the external political pressures on Muslim minorities, particularly in the last decade, have rendered internal divisions among Muslim communities less important. It has also led to movements to structure a united Muslim voice. Aly and Green (Aly & Green 2008, p.8) claimed that ‘the ethnic divisions within the Muslim diaspora are becoming less significant as Australian Muslims reconstruct their identity based on a notion of supporting each other in the face of a global alliance against Islam’.

In the last two or three decades, there has been a growing tendency to use the term ‘Muslim’ to describe people who come from the Middle East, North Africa, and some Asian countries. In Europe, people who were previously called ‘immigrant workers’ are increasingly called ‘Muslim immigrants’ (Roy 2007; Yilmaz 2012). Roy (2004, p.126) claimed that the term ‘Muslims’ is currently used as a ‘neo-ethnic’ term in Europe, but this contains a number of presumptions. Firstly, Islam is thought to be the main component of Muslims’ cultures, so anyone from a Muslim country shares Islamic beliefs. Secondly, faith is somewhat irrelevant, so we hear terms such as ‘non-practising Muslims’ or ‘non-believing Muslims’. Thirdly, this neo-ethnic term separates Muslims from the other, which is not a religious community, but usually a ‘pseudo-ethnic’ group such as ‘Whites’ and ‘Europeans’. This is to say that ‘chaotically diverse human beings’ (Aly 2007, p.209) have been discursively homogenised and largely constructed in opposition to the West. Nowadays, terms such as Australian Muslims, American Muslims and British Muslims have made their way into public conversations. This has had direct political implications. Who is recognised to be a leader of such a diverse group?

Social identity theory has recently developed a sound theoretical framework regarding leadership. Hogg (2001, p.194) defined leadership as ‘a process of influence that enlist and mobilizes the involvement of others in the attainment of collective goals’. The power, in an identity group, rests on the ability to define the content of shared identity. Leaders are those who are able to establish their own definition of identity. In this definition, power does not equate with the control of material resources, but is the capacity to define and represent the core characteristics and prototype of the group (Hogg 2001; Turner 2005). Reicher, Haslam
and Hopkins (2005, p.556) provided the principles of social identity theory approach to leadership as follows:

(1) Social identities provide the parameters of mass mobilization. (2) Who is included within a social category determines who will be mobilized. (3) The content ascribed to the social category will determine what they will be mobilized for. (4) The prototypes of the category will determine who will be in a position to direct the mobilization.

In other words, leadership is ‘a matter of interpreting what it means to be “us” in a given context’ (Reicher, Haslam & Hopkins 2005, p.564). Moreover, leaders are those who are able to initiate and develop structures that support their definition and interpretation of shared identity. This process is often contested and involves rivalry among leaders. The success of leaders to a great extent lies in surmounting resistance (Reicher, Haslam & Hopkins 2005, p.560). This conception of leadership implies that the principal form of power available to leaders is symbolic power:

A power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself, an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force. (Bourdieu 1991, p.170)

This symbolic power enables leaders to situate themselves as true representatives of a group. They define the group identity, envision its future and explain its views towards external groups. They are the spokespeople of the group. Spokespeople do not passively present the views of a group, rather they ‘create’ the group through their representations (Bourdieu 1991, p.204).

The use of this definition for Muslim leaders may be faced with a critique based around Islamic religious authority. It may be claimed that Imams have traditionally been the respected leaders of Muslim communities and therefore are those who define the content of the shared identity, i.e. the meaning of Muslimness. This existing leadership structure
renders alternative definitions, such as ours above, unnecessary. I suggest that this argument is simplistic due to the following.

In line with the findings of the present study, the extant literature shows that many Australian Muslims are dissatisfied with Imams’ performances in Australia (see e.g. Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia 2010; Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2007). This is often related to Imams’ poor English literacy and also their lack of familiarity with Australian cultural and political norms. It is partly in response to these shortcomings that many young, educated and Australian born or grown Muslims have stepped into the Australian public sphere to defend their communities. Their entry into the public sphere has created competition and sometimes hostility among Australian Muslim leaders. I will illustrate this point throughout the thesis.

It should also be noted that religious authority in Islam is very different from that in Christianity. The religious authority in Islam is intrinsically pluralistic. Turner (2007, p.119) describes the role of Imam in Islam as follows:

Their authority is essentially the authority of a good teacher who comes to earn the respect of his students and followers because he offers what is regarded as sound advice on matters that have some spiritual import, such as diet, marriage, sexual behaviour, domestic management of the household or interaction with strangers. In short, Islam has no priests and an imam is simply a person who leads the prayers and who is normally attached to a mosque.

This means that no superior entity decides who the most legitimate Imam is. Instead, ordinary Muslims follow their own rationality and sense to choose an Imam to listen to. This democratic conception of religious authority creates a decentralised religious leadership and sometimes leads to competition amongst Imams. A cursory look at Australian Imams reveals their disagreements on various religious, cultural, and political issues. Therefore, it would be very simplistic to equate Muslim leadership with Imams’ religious authority. We need a conception of leadership that accounts for competition amongst Muslim leaders. Social identity theory has provided us with this conception.
There are, and have always been, multiple interpretations of Islam and its teachings in the Muslim world. However, Muslims from different traditions or sects have usually lived geographically separately from each other. In contemporary multicultural western societies such as Australia, Muslims from distinct Islamic groups, sects, and ethnicities have come to live side by side. Living in a society where the majority is non-Muslim has led them to discount their internal divisions (Bouma & Munawar 2001). Since the 1970s, with the increase in the number of Muslim settlers in Australia, many organisations and structures have emerged to address settlement issues as well as cultural and religious affairs.

The Emergence of Muslim leadership in Australia

The Australian government has played a large part in the formation and development of ethnic leadership in Australia. Hage (1998) argued that ethnic communities had taken shape well before the establishment of multiculturalism policy. The Australian government, he claimed, adopted multiculturalism policy in the 1970s in order to manage these ethnic communities more efficiently. Multiculturalism then extended state power into ethnic communities. Castles et al. (1992, p.71) asserted that multiculturalism was ‘part of a process of construction of ethnic groups as a focal point of social cohesion and social mobilization in Australia’. Consequently ‘the leaders of ethnic organisations were recognized by government as partners for consultations, and they were drawn into a wide range of advisory bodies’ (Castles et al. 1992, p.71). The government channeled funding and grants for services, welfare benefits, and cultural programs through recognised ethnic organisations and leaders. They also referred to the role of the ‘ethnic vote’ in the 1980s as a reason for the government’s support of ethnic organisations. For instance, Castles et al. (1992) claimed that Barry Unsworth, the Premier of NSW, was considering the ‘Muslim vote’ in some Sydney suburbs. Similarly, Tabar, Noble and Poynting (2003) argued that with the advent of multiculturalism in 1970s, ethnicity became a ‘field’ in the Bourdieusian sense. They claimed that ‘Australian multiculturalism led to the development of organisations and leaders whose task was not only to service the needs of specific “ethnic communities” but to represent them in the wider political field’ (2003, p.268).
Humphrey (1992) looked into the role of the government in the development of Lebanese community leadership. He claimed that the Australian government played a large part in the consolidation of Sunni Lebanese leadership in the post-1975 period. The Lebanese in Sydney, he asserted, were fragmented and organised around village, regional, ethnic and religious associations. The fragmentation of leaders and organisations encumbered state consultations and negotiations for the allocation of funding. This was particularly important due to dire socio-economic conditions and high unemployment rates in the Lebanese community. Sunni Lebanese Muslims, unlike their Christian counterparts, did not have a church-like hierarchical structure. Lebanese leaders were competing with each other for government funding. The government, in order to make better use of its resources, encouraged Lebanese organisations to consolidate and unify. The government preferred groups or leaders who represented a wider section of the community. This paved the way for the emergence of wider representative bodies that proved to be religious rather than ethnic. Religious leaders (Imams) came to act as representative leaders for Sunni Lebanese, and the mosque became the hub for leadership and its related rivalries.

As well as the Australian government, foreign governments influenced the structure of Muslim leadership in Australia. Cleland (2002) described the role of the Saudi Arabian government in supporting the establishment of a national body for Australian Muslims. This mostly happened through the conferring of Halal certificate licenses on the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC), recognising it as the sole Australian authority for issuing Halal certificates. This was to help strengthen the backbone of Australian Muslim communities. In the early stages of the AFIC establishment, Saudi Arabia offered 1.2 million dollars to the AFIC for building mosques and Islamic schools (Cleland 2002). The Turkish government also sent Imams for Turkish mosques for periods of four or five years (Bouma 1994). Some Muslim groups, for instance Hizb ut-Tahrir, are branches of international Muslim organisations and their leadership structure is influenced by their mother organisations.

In the last decade, with the increasing politicisation of Islam, a new group of Muslim leaders has emerged whose main expertise is in the handling of public discourses about Islam and Muslims (Modood & Ahmad 2007). These Muslims, who are mostly young,
educated, second-generation Muslims⁠¹, have made their way into the Australian public sphere. They are mostly supported by the government and actively participate in political discussions. I call these leaders ‘integrationist’. In the following section, I provide a categorisation of Muslim leaders based on their acceptance or rejection of the integration of Muslims into wider society.

The Categorisation of Australian Muslim leaders

It is difficult to provide a comprehensive classification of Muslim leaders in Australia. In general, subjects can be classified in various ways based on the purpose of the study. What is of concern here is a classification that lends itself to a discussion of social integration. This classification, first and foremost, should be sociological rather than theological and religious. Religious and theological divisions matter to our discussion to the extent that they are sociologically meaningful. There have been attempts to provide a classification of Muslims. Saeed (2007, p.396), for example, offered a complex and multi-layered classification of Muslims on the basis of ‘broad orientations of Muslims today towards law, theological purity, violence, politics, separation of religion and state, practice, modernity or ijtihad [examination of Islamic sources to make a rule for newly emerging issues]’. Based on these criteria, he divided Muslims into eight groups: legalist traditionalists, theological puritans, militant extremists, political Islamists, secular liberals, cultural nominalists, classical modernists, and progressive Ijtihadis. Such classifications, although very comprehensive, do not offer a good analytical tool for specific topics. The basis of the typology is so broad that it includes almost everything. As is often the case with broad models, it diminishes the analytical power of the model.

For the purpose of this study, I offer a classification of Muslim leaders on the basis of social integration. The criterion is whether the groups or leaders explicitly promote the social integration of Muslims into wider Australian society. On this ground, I classify Muslim leaders as integrationists, isolationists, and radicals. In the following, I define each

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¹ By ‘second-generation Muslims’ I mean second generation immigrants who are Muslim.
group and provide examples. ‘Integrationist leaders’ in particular, are important to this study because most of the participants fall into this category. The leaders whom I call ‘integrationists’ are often referred to as ‘moderates’. I explain ‘integrationist Muslims’ through a critique of the notion of ‘moderate Muslims’.

**Moderate Islam**

The term ‘moderate Muslims’ is commonly used in media and political discourses; however, it is rarely defined. Modood and Ahmad (2007) offered a good characterisation of moderate Muslims. They suggested that “‘moderate Muslim’ is a relational concept … it is about a relationship between Muslims and the ‘West’” (p.192). They maintained that moderate Muslims are those who see no antagonism between their understanding of Islam and the West, and they are able to reconcile them intellectually and practically: “‘moderate Muslims” can be seen as an explicit and reasoned struggle to create a hybrid position. At least sociologically, it is more like a “hyphenated identity”’ (p.192). They also emphasised that the term ‘Muslim’ is used as ‘a sociological category for identification, not as a faith category’ (p.193). This sociological approach is appropriate to this study.

Modood and Ahmad (2007) situated moderate Muslims between two groups: fundamentalists and radical reformists. They differentiated moderate Muslims from radical reformists who ‘openly identify as part of a “movement”’ (2007, p.193). Amina Wadud is an example of a radical reformist. She is an American feminist Muslim who has challenged the traditional patriarchal interpretations of the Quran. She leads Friday prayers for mixed-gender Muslim groups, which has been very controversial. Modood and Ahmad (2007) indicated that moderate leaders reflect the ideas and opinions of mainstream Muslim populations rather than aiming to change the interpretations and practices of mainstream Muslims.

The above conceptualisation is nuanced enough. Nonetheless, many Muslims do not want to be called moderate. Modood and Ahmad (2007), in their study on British Muslim leaders, said that some of their interviewees were unhappy to be called moderate. This
resonates with the findings of the current study on Australian Muslim leaders. There are two reasons for this reluctance. First, the term moderate may be interpreted as moderate in religiosity and faith. Aly (2007, p.68), a well-known Australian Muslim public figure, regarded the notion of moderate Muslim as ‘contemptible’ and ‘meaningless’:

I cringe every time the ‘moderate’ label is applied to me. I understand it is probably meant to be a compliment, but the truth is that it is offensive in the way it would be to be called a ‘moderate intellect’. It carries the connotation that one’s faith is somehow diluted. It implies, condescendingly, that it is socially acceptable to be a Muslim, as long as you are not too Muslim.

In a similar fashion, Dellal, president of the Australian Multicultural Foundation, expressed misgivings about the meaning of ‘moderate’:

What does that mean? Am I a moderate Muslim or I’m not? Or is that really a code for those that bomb and those that don’t? Is that a code for radicals and extremists, and those that are secular? … The level of my religiosity is different, the way I practice it, but you can’t say whether I am moderate or not, so what is a moderate Muslim? One may pray but also drink? What is moderate Muslim? In whose eyes? (Interview data)

As these quotes indicate, the term moderate suggests a diluted or tainted faith to some Muslims. This is why they are reluctant to identify with it. Furthermore, Aly (2007) claimed that the discourse of moderate Islam has removed the religious content of Islam and reduced it to a political entity. He held that the non-existence of a ‘moderate Christian’ category reveals that Christianity is considered religion. Therefore, the discourse of moderate Islam has emptied Islam of its religious content in public debates.

Part of the perplexity of ‘moderate Islam’ results from the fact that it was not developed by Muslims but imposed on them by western policy makers. There are many divisions among Muslims which are rooted in their long history. Terms such as Sunni/Shia, Ash’ari/Motazele and Hanafi/Shafei/Maleki/Hanbali have developed out of Muslim history. But moderate Islam is different because it is not rooted in the internal dynamics of Muslim
History. Considering the widespread misgivings of Muslims about western government agendas, such terms are viewed with suspicion. *Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia*, a radical Islamic political party, criticised the language of moderation and radicalism:

Thus we must reject the West’s idea of extremism and moderation. We must reject the West’s interference in the affairs of our deen [religion]. That is why this discussion did not proceed from a Shar’ee [Islamic law] standpoint from the very beginning. Rather it is a political stance, used to entrench a direction in the Ummah [Islamic community] suitable for the West. It is [a] discussion that relates to the continuation of the colonisation of people’s minds (*Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia* 2009, p.3).

These reasons have made many Muslim leaders wary of identifying with the term. I have adopted Modood and Ahmad’s (2007) characterisation of ‘moderate Muslims’, but replaced ‘moderate’ with ‘integrationist’. The term ‘integrationist Muslims’ is more sociological and does not imply moderation in religiosity in the way ‘moderate Muslims’ does. ‘Moderate Muslims’ also has a general theme and is used in a range of topics including Muslims’ approaches towards modernity, secularism, liberalism and democracy, among other things. In contrast, ‘integrationist Muslims’ refers directly to the main theme of study, namely, social integration.

**Integrationist Muslim leaders in Australia**

There are many Muslim organisations and leaders in Australia that are integrationist. They include the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC), state Islamic Councils (e.g. Islamic Council of NSW, Islamic Council of Victoria), Muslim women’s organisations (e.g. Muslim Women’s Association, Islamic Women’s Welfare Council of Victoria, Muslim Women’s National Network Australia), Muslim Youth Organisations (e.g. Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth), Muslim media (e.g. Crescent Times newspaper, Muslim Village website), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with active Muslim programs (e.g. the Australian Multicultural Foundation) and several other
community organisations, refugee advocacy organisations, and university student associations. Integrationist leaders are very vocal and visible in the Australian public sphere. Many integrationist Muslim academics, intellectuals, comedians, writers, artists, and students participate in panels held in the media, universities, interfaith dialogues, and community organisations to present their views on various political, cultural, social and religious issues.

One of the most notable programs of integrationist Muslim leaders was the *Salam Café* comedy show on TV channel SBS in 2008. The show was run by a number of Muslim youth and was performed in front of a live audience. It had a humorous take on Muslim beliefs and ways of life, and at the same time aimed to remove misconceptions about Muslims. The show uncovered the various contexts in which Muslims experience racism and prejudice in Australia (Dreher 2009). Susan Carland, a Muslim public figure and a panellist on the show, maintained that the program aimed to normalise Muslims: ‘For me, it's very important that this show is about Muslims, not about Islam. It's just showing that Muslims are normal people. We're not from Planet Islam. It's showing the human face of the Muslim community’ (Molitorisz 2008). Eliminating the misconceptions about Islam in the public sphere is one aim that most integrationist leaders seek to achieve.

In the last decade, several Muslim leaders have become well-known in Australia through speaking publicly about Islam and Muslims. Most notable is Waleed Aly, an academic, and a radio and TV presenter. There are several others, and their numbers are increasing. They have added a new and important layer to the Muslim leadership. They do not claim to be religious scholars (Imams). Nonetheless, they speak openly about Islamic-related issues and seek to remove misunderstandings about Islam. They aim to dissociate Islam from terrorism, violence, fundamentalism, and misogyny. Their main expertise is in the handling of public discourses. They are mostly Australian born and are very familiar with Australian political culture. They possess the cultural capital required for efficient communication to a wider Australian public. Cultural capital is described as the knowledge, language literacy, skills, and education of which individuals take advantage for their upward social mobility. Unlike financial capital, cultural capital is not easily transmissible, but is learnt over a long period of socialisation, particularly within the family (Bourdieu 1986). Australian Imams
are mostly foreign born and are not competent in speaking in the Australian public sphere. Occasionally, their indelicate and controversial comments have resulted in furious public reaction. The Imams’ lack of the necessary skills in public speaking (both English literacy and familiarity with Australian public sphere) has laid the ground for integrationist leaders to fill the gap. As examples of integrationist Muslim organisations, I describe the attitudes and activities of two in particular: the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) and the Muslim Women’s Association (MWA).

The Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) best exemplifies the rise of young, educated and articulate integrationist leaders. It is the peak body of Victorian Muslims. Victoria hosts 152,779 Muslims, second only to NSW with 219,378 Muslims. The ICV has many affiliated member organisations throughout Victoria. Akbarzadeh and Roose (2011) studied two prominent examples of moderate Muslim organisations in Britain and Australia: The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) and the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV). They described the ICV as pro-multiculturalism and pro-dialogue, and as a group that has ‘acted as a buffer between more extreme elements of Muslim communities and wider Australia, on occasion filtering unrepeatable claims from the constituents’ (2011, p.317). They also pointed out that the ICV has been criticised for being ‘too moderate’ and ‘has worked actively with more conservative Muslim organisations to include them in decision-making processes and community engagement’ (2011, p.317).

Jakubowicz (2007) examined the Muslim Women’s Association (MWA). This organisation aims to empower Muslim women by providing them with a wide variety of services. They have tried to do this ‘in the face of internal fundamentalism and external racism’ (p. 276). The organisation has launched constructive debates within Muslim communities about women’s rights. They have also included Imams and religious leaders in their discussions, and focused particularly on preparing women for leadership positions: ‘Leadership development has become a major dimension of MWA work not only in the camps and mentoring processes, but also in areas such as media workshops and skill development’ (Jakubowicz 2007, p.276).
Integrationist leaders and organisations are pro-multiculturalist and advocate for the social integration of Muslims into wider Australian society. They view Islam as a peaceful religion that can coexist comfortably with non-Muslim cultures. They criticise Muslim radicals, right-wing media and conservative politicians for the misrepresentation of Islam in the public sphere.

Isolationist and radical Muslim leaders in Australia

Isolationist and radical Muslim leaders are those who do not encourage Australian Muslims to integrate into Australian society. These two groups are not mutually exclusive. Their differentiation is mostly related to their social or political nature. By isolationist groups, I refer to apolitical Muslim groups whose main goal is to establish and maintain fairly exclusive communities for spiritual and religious purposes. By radicals, I refer to Muslim groups who are politically active, assertive, and who engage critically with society’s dominant institutions. They, by and large, reject the compatibility of Islam with the western culture. I give examples of these groups in the following section.

*Tablighi Jama’at* (Preaching Party) is one isolationist Muslim group in Australia. Ali (2010, p.118) suggested that the group is ‘an apolitical transnational Islamic revivalist movement’. It emerged initially in India in 1927 and later expanded to other Muslim countries. The group became active in Australia in the 1980s and was quite successful in recruiting Muslims, especially second-generation Muslims. Ali claimed that the *Tablighis* shy away from the material pleasures of life and dedicate themselves to a spiritual and pious life. The group encourages inter-religious interactions and promotes a ‘de-ethnicised Muslim identity’ (p.119). The followers of the group are visible through their special dress *Kammez* (Islamic attire). In 2002, they ‘drew together in excess of 3000 Muslims from all over Australia at a mosque in the Sydney suburb of Rooty Hill’ (p. 127).

Strong community bonds and spiritual connections give them an exclusive social identity: ‘*Tablighis* detach or exclude themselves sufficiently from mainstream Australia to be able to have a “self” constructed in isolation from, rather than in conjunction with, mainstream
Australia’ (Ali 2010, p.131). Hence the Tablighis have strong in-group relations based on brotherhood and spiritual bonds. Ali asserted that ‘within the Australian world there is another world which Tablighis have created and in which they live’ (p.138).

Another group or movement which is more important than Tablighi Jama’at is Salafism. Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamma’ah Association of Australia (ASWJAA) largely embodies the Salafi movement in Australia. Salafi groups have been mostly isolationist. Nonetheless, some strands have become politically active. In recent years, Salafis have become highly active and vocal in both Muslim majority countries and in the West. Salafis are sometimes wrongly equated with the al-Qaeda organisation which was responsible for the September 11 attacks. Due to the rising power of Salafis, I explain their beliefs in more detail.

The term Salafi refers to Salaf, who were the first three, righteous generations of Muslims. The term indicates the will to purify Muslim society by considering the Islam of ‘pious ancestors’ as the truest Islam (Haykel 2009, p.33). Salafism is a branch of jurisprudence and practice that is part of Sunni Islam. Their characteristics include ‘rejection of sectarianism and jurisprudential pluralism’. To them, there is only one Islam, so they reject the jurisprudential schools (madhahib) that exist in Sunni Islam. They are also very critical of ‘innovations’ in Islam. They believe that some prevalent practices of Muslims are innovations that have entered into Islam over history. An example of such innovations, which they say have to be removed from Islam, is the building and visiting of shrines for holy people. They promote the idea of a pure Islam which can be realised by following a literal interpretation of the Quran and Hadith (Mandaville 2007, 246). The emphasis of Salafis on the literal interpretation of Islamic sources has led some scholars to call them fundamentalists, drawing parallels with Christianity.

Wahhabism can be considered a variant of Salafism (Mandaville 2007, p.247). The terms Salafi and Wahhabi (the dominant religious establishment in Saudi Arabia) are used interchangeably (They have subtle differences which are not important for our discussion here). In terms of politics, Salafis are mostly apolitical, being more concerned with faith than politics, but their religious worldview has political implications (Haykel 2009).
Salafis are not homogenous. Mandaville classified them into three groups: Salafi quietists, Salafi Islamists and Salafi Jihadis. Salafi quietists, who comprise mainstream Salafis, are more religiously oriented and almost apolitical. They are more concerned with a pious and conservative lifestyle. The second group, Salafi Islamists, have a political vision but they adopt violence only in specific circumstances. The third group, Salafi Jihadis advocate violence to reach their political aim. Al-Qaeda is the best known example of Salafi Jihadis (Mandaville 2007, p.248-9). In a similar fashion, Wiktorowicz (2006, p.208) categorised Salafis to three groups: Purists, Politicos, and Jihadis. Purists focus on education and view political engagement as a path to deviancy. Politicos advocate the application of Salafi beliefs in politics and Jihadis are revolutionary and resort to violence to achieve their goals.

In recent years, we have witnessed violent (though not necessarily terrorist) actions by Salafis in the West and in Muslim countries. In 2012, Salafi groups reacted to an anti-Islam rally of a far right group in front of an Islamic school in Bonn. The nationalist group held up caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad displaying him as a terrorist. Salafis reacted and clashed with the police, and many people were wounded and arrested (Eddy 2012; Kern 2012). In Tunisia, after the ousting of president Ben-Ali in the so called Arab Spring, Salafis acted violently to protest against symbols of western culture, alcohol outlets, music and comedies, which they perceived as containing anti-Islamic themes (Dhaouadi 2012). More recently, an anti-Islam movie trailer, Innocence of Muslims, made by a Coptic Egyptian-American, triggered anti-American protests by Muslims around the world, including in Australia. The protests, spearheaded by Salafists (Meo 2012), turned into violence and clashes with the police. These incidents and several others have raised concerns about the growth of the Salafi strand among Muslims around the world. The financial sponsorship of Saudi Arabia has also raised concerns. The Saudi government is the main financial supporter of Wahabi and Salafi Islam in the world. In its weekly Ain al-Yaqeen magazine, the Saudi government stated that:

The cost of King Fahd's efforts in this field has been astronomical, amounting to many billions of Saudi Riyals. In terms of Islamic institutions, the result is some 210 Islamic Centers wholly or partly financed by Saudi Arabia, more than 1,500 Mosques and 202 colleges and almost 2,000 schools for educating Muslim children.
in non-Islamic countries in Europe, North and South America, Australia and Asia’ (Al-Yaqeen 2002).

The association with terrorism (Al-Qaeda), violence, an ultra-conservative worldview (conspicuously not female-friendly) and links with the Saudi government (as an ultra-conservative state) have raised concerns in the West about Salafis and their integrative capacities. In Australia, Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamma’ah is the main Salafi group, and it has been controversial. I return to this in Chapter seven. Salafis, at best, are isolationist, and some groups or strands of Salafi can be considered radical.

A clear example of a radical political Muslim group is Hizb ut-Tahrir. This group is an international organisation with branches in many countries including Australia. They are revolutionary in their goal (establishing a pan-Islamic state in the Muslim world) but non-violent in their methods. Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia has been very vocal and controversial in the Australian public in recent years and has harshly criticised ‘moderate Islam’. I will describe this group comprehensively in Chapter Seven.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a brief review of the literature on the social integration of Australian Muslims into wider society. Australian Muslims have not been viewed positively by the Australia public and have been largely placed outside the space of ‘normal’. Islam and Muslims have been historically constructed as stagnant, pre-modern, violent, and misogynist against the progressive, modern, civilised and egalitarian West. This construction exists in the writings of key sociological figures such as Marx, Weber, and de Tocqueville and prevails in western political and media discourses. This historical construction impedes the social integration of Muslims into broader society. Social integration, therefore, necessitates a process of normalisation of the image of Islam and Muslims in the West.

The role of two key institutions, the state and the media, vis-à-vis social integration were also investigated. Australian Muslims are, by and large, considered and treated by the
Australian state as a national security issue. Consequently, national security concerns have embedded in social inclusion and social cohesion in government policies in Australia, evident in the Howard Government’s National Action Plan (NAP). In addition, Australian media discourses are overwhelmingly negative and derogatory towards Muslims.

Finally, I explained the field of Muslim leadership and its various strands in relation to social integration, leadership being defined in accordance with social identity theory. Leaders are those members of a group who are able to set their interpretation of a shared identity. They are also able to develop material structures in support of their interpretations. Leadership is often contested, and this is the case in the field of Muslim leadership in Australia. Several leaders and groups compete to set their definitions and interpretations of true Islam. In relation to social integration, Muslim leaders were categorised as integrationist, radical, and isolationist. These leaders and groups have put forward competing discourses about social integration. Their discourses and activities are explored in the following chapters.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODS

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I discuss the methodological aspects of this study. A qualitative research method was adopted. Qualitative methods are used when the researcher aims to provide a ‘thick description’, unravel the dynamics of convoluted social problems, and investigate the meanings people attach to their actions (Miles and Huberman 1994, p.10). This is appropriate to the research questions and goals of this study, which explores the various aspects and components of the normalisation of Muslims’ image in the Australian public sphere. This topic is multifaceted, covering politics, community, ethnicity, religion, media and leadership. The complexity involved means that the topic could not be insightfully studied using quantitative methods.

The principal research tool was the semi-structured interview, commonly employed in qualitative research. Most interviewees were comfortable with being cited. A list of participants, including a brief introductory note for each, is provided in the appendix. In the following paragraphs, sampling, recruitment, confidentiality, and data analysis will be outlined. I conclude with a discussion of the researcher’s position (as an Iranian), and its impact on the recruitment and interviewing.

SAMPLING

Sampling in qualitative research often involves a small number of cases that are subject to in-depth investigation. The small size of the sample tends not to allow for generalisation of the results. Miles and Huberman (1994, p.28) suggested that ‘the most useful generalisations made in qualitative studies are analytic, not “sample-to-population”’. This means that qualitative methods reveal the main themes relevant to the subject.

A combination of purposive and snowballing sampling techniques was used in this study. The small size of the sample in qualitative methods necessitates purposive sampling. Otherwise, it is highly likely that the resulting sample will be biased. It is also essential in
qualitative sampling to have a diverse sample based around the research subject. This serves to facilitate the gathering of more representative data. Miles and Huberman (1994, p.28) stated that maximum variation ‘involves looking for outlier cases to see whether main patterns still hold up’. They argued that ‘searching deliberately for confirming and disconfirming cases, extreme or deviant cases, and typical cases, serves to increase confidence in conclusions’ (1994, p.28 italics in the original).

I aimed to increase the diversity of the sample in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, political view, and leadership role. Participants were from Melbourne and Sydney, where the majority of Australian Muslims live. Overall thirty Muslim leaders were interviewed in 2010 and 2011. It should be noted that the interviewees were all Sunnis and no Shi’a leaders were included. This was not a deliberate strategy. A number of Shi’a leaders were approached, but practical issues did not allow me to set up appointments. Sunnis comprise the majority of Muslims throughout the world, and this is also true of Australia. Shi’a Muslims are a minority, comprising only around ten to fifteen per cent of the Muslim population worldwide.

The participants in this study were all Muslim leaders. Muslim leaders are those Muslims whose voices and activities have some impact on the image of Muslims and Islam in the Australian public sphere. Leaders of a group are those who are able to define shared identity. This definition of leadership accords well with main argument of this thesis around normalisation (and counter-normalisation) processes. Muslim leaders from various groups put forward dissimilar discourses about what true Islam is and what Australian Muslims think about such issues as western cultures, terrorism, gender equality and Australia. The above definition of leadership, which was introduced by social identity theory, allows for the exploration of rivalries among Muslim leaders.

In terms of their leadership role, the participants can be divided into two principal types: reputational leaders and organisational leaders. Reputational leaders are those who possess the credibility to talk in public on behalf of Muslims. They play a large role in the shaping of Muslims’ images in the Australian public sphere. Most of the interviewees are frequently
consulted by journalists regarding Muslim-related issues and play an important role in representing the opinions of ordinary Muslims.

The second group consists of those who hold key organisational positions within Muslim communities. They are the heads of organisations such as Islamic centres, Islamic councils, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Islamic associations. They may or may not talk to the media. I consider these people to be leaders based on the definition provided above. Leaders not only define the content of shared identity, but are capable of initiating structures to foster their definitions: ‘Leaders must be organizers as well as visionaries’ (Reicher, Haslam, and Hopkins 2005, p.560). The definition of identity is effective if a pertinent and supportive social order and structure is built up. Expressed differently, for leadership to be effective, it needs to contain both symbolic and material structures.

In terms of the respondents’ opinions regarding social integration, most were integrationist. This means that they promote discourses and engage in activities in support of the integration of Muslims into broader society. Integrationist leaders endeavour to normalise the image of Muslims and Islam so that they are not singled out and degraded in public discourses. Only two of the interviewees did not fit this category and represented Muslim isolationists and radicals. The majority of the literature on Australian Muslims shows that ‘radicals’, ‘extremists’, or ‘fundamentalists’ are a minority among Australian Muslims. This is not surprising considering the fact that generally speaking in every social group, radicals or fundamentalists constitute a fringe sub-group. This is also the case in Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. I allocate one chapter to a discussion of the views of Muslim radicals and isolationists because they are significant contributors to the process of (de)normalisation of Muslim identity in Australia. The two interviewees were key people and represented two important Muslim groups. I have supplemented the two interviews with information from the websites of their respective organisations (Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia and Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamm’ah Association of Australia).

In the appendix, I provide a list of interviewees with a brief introductory note about each. It is important to know whose voice is explained in the following chapters. Not only is ‘what’ is said important, but also ‘who’ talked, in order to comprehend the power status of these
voices in Muslim communities. Three interviewees chose to remain anonymous, and I use italics when citing them to distinguish them from those using their real names. Anonymisation is a common method among researchers for protecting research participants, but there are factors that need to be considered with anonymous reporting.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research noted three basic ethical principles of research: respect for participants, beneficence (including no harm) and justice (National Health and Medical Research Council 2009). Participants must be protected from any physical, legal or emotional harm. Assurances of confidentiality and the anonymisation of participants are tools to ensure they are not at risk through their participation in the research. Confidentiality differs from anonymity: ‘Anonymity is a vehicle by which confidentiality is operationalised’ (Wiles et al. 2006, p.2). Anonymisation has almost become a norm in research communities (BERA 2004, p.8), and is often secured by the use of pseudonyms.

A methodological issue arising from anonymisation is that the integrity of the data may be compromised. To protect someone, their information needs to be changed to the extent that they are not identifiable by readers or by other participants. This process can be problematic, because participants’ ages, jobs, ethnicities or other characteristics may be changed, and this at least partly distorts the data. How far must one go in changing participants’ information? Humphreys provided a rule: ‘The usual rule of thumb for disguises is that the data should be presented in such a form that an outsider cannot identify any citizen while any citizen can recognize himself through the disguise’ (Humphreys, 1975 cited in Barnes 1979, p.139).

Barnes (1979) studied the use of pseudonyms from another perspective. He invoked Goffman’s (1959) analysis of front and back stages. The respondents participating in a study are on the stage, performing presentation of self, and doing impression management. This process is dramatic in the sense that participants highlight certain aspects of themselves and under-represent others in order to create their desired image. In contrast, the
researcher strives to understand and explain the underlying causes, relationships and dynamics of events, which might not match the participant’s story. The researcher may reveal dynamics of front and back stage that are often not pleasant for people. Barnes quoted a participant who had read a research publication. He admitted that the story was honest and accurate, but that ‘it still hurts to see things carefully laid out’ (Barnes 1979, p.138). Hence Barnes argued that ‘it is easier for the citizens to avoid facing up to the picture of themselves if their real name is not on it’ (Barnes 1979, p.138).

Some scholars have questioned the very basic assumption that anonymity is always preferred by participants. In her research on youth aged 18 to 25 who were diagnosed with cancer, Grinyer (2002, p.5) observed that they preferred to be cited in publications. She claimed that participants may like to retain the ‘ownership’ of their stories. However, she referred to some practical issues arising from optional disclosure of names by participants. In such cases, some respondents choose to remain anonymous and others opt for using their real names. Therefore the researcher ends up with a mix of pseudonyms and real names, which encumbers the reporting of data. She suggested that in these situations, the use of italics for pseudonyms may help avoid confusion. Accordingly, I use italics for those participants who requested pseudonyms.

Participants were asked if they wished their names to be cited. Most opted for their real names to be used. Some asked to check the interview transcripts prior to publication. I sent them the transcripts later and they made minor amendments. Three participants wanted to remain anonymous. In one case, the interviewee was reluctant for her voice to be recorded, but agreed provided that the audio file was destroyed after she confirmed the transcript. This was duly actioned.

Demographics of the sample

Merleau-Ponty (1962, p.67) once asked: ‘Is not to see always to see from somewhere?’ He asked this question in describing the embodied nature of human’s perceptions. He said that we always see objects from a particular perspective, and only get a partial view of objects.
at any one moment. He was talking about the physical act of seeing. But this question can be asked about our ‘worldviews’ as well. Our views of life, society, politics and happiness, are all situated and bound up with our social position. Gender, class, age, place of abode and ethnicity all contribute to how we experience life situations and shape our minds about them. Human knowledge is not objective, but situated (Haraway 1988). Therefore, participants’ views have to be described in conjunction with their social position. In the following, I provide information on the social positions of the participants.

**Gender:** The sample consisted of 18 men and 12 women. In recent years, the number of female Muslim leaders and spokespeople has been growing. This is important when the fact that Muslim women are constantly depicted as oppressed, subjugated and passive is taken into account. The emergence of articulate Muslim women has been generally supported by Muslim leaders and organisations. Currently, there are considerable numbers of Muslim women who are writers, journalists, public commentators, artists and community activists. This trend is reflected in the sample.

**Education:** Australian Muslims are comparatively more educated than non-Muslim Australians (Hassan 2009). In general, education is one of the most significant channels of social mobility for migrants, particularly for those who seek leadership positions. Education helps people gain the cultural capital required for effective communication in leadership positions. In this study, the participants were well-educated: 13 interviewees had post-graduate qualifications and 14 had undergraduate degrees, while three lacked a university degree.

**Age:** Muslim immigration to Australia began in large numbers in the 1970s. Over one third of Australian Muslims were born in Australia. Australian Muslims are relatively younger than the rest of the population. To some extent, this is reflected in the leadership structure. Some interviewees indicated that Melbourne and Sydney are dissimilar in this regard. The Islamic Council of Victoria, the peak Muslim body in Victoria, has a young and mostly Australian-born board. According to some of the interviewees, Sydney Muslim leaders are relatively older. In Sydney, first generation Muslims still play the leading roles in the
community. The age of the participants was as follows: six people between 20 and 34, 12 people between 35 and 44, and 12 were 45 and above.

**Length of residence in Australia:** For someone to climb to a leadership position, it is necessary to understand the wider social environment, institutions, rules and dynamics. The majority of participants in this study were Australian born or arrived in Australia in their early childhood. The literature shows that the length of residence correlates with the level of political participation among Muslims (Al-Momani et al. 2010, p.42). The sample is comprised of 20 people who were born or grew up in Australia, seven had lived more than 20 years in Australia, and three had lived in Australia for between 15 and 20 years.

**Ethnic Background**

Australian Muslims come from over 60 countries, with Lebanese and Turkish Muslims comprising the largest ethnic groups. Anglo-Australian converts are also active in Muslim organisations and are visible in Muslim positions of leadership. The literature shows that there is a greater likelihood for converts and Australian-born Muslims to be politically active (Al-Momani et al. 2010, p.42). Ethnicity is relevant to political participation mainly through other factors such as length of residence and the political culture of the original country (Al-Momani et al. 2010, p.44). The following table demonstrates the ethnic origin of the participants.

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*Total: 29*
Notice: The numbers do not total 30 because three anonymous participants were excluded, and two participants stated two countries as their background (total 29).

The final factor is related to city of residence. The sample consisted of 18 participants from Melbourne, 11 from Sydney, and one from Canberra.

RECRUITMENT

Australian Muslims are a small minority and Australian Muslim leaders are few. The main selection criterion was to choose those Muslims or Muslim organisations whose voices are heard in the Australian public sphere. This criterion is related to the definition of leadership discussed earlier. I planned to recruit those Muslims who either speak on behalf of Australian Muslim communities or are reported in the media as Muslim leaders. In both cases, these people impact on the ways in which Islam and Muslims are viewed in the Australian public sphere.

The first step was to compile a list of potential participants through an internet search, where contact details were easily found. Recruitment began with emails being sent to Muslim leaders. I attached the Statement of Research and invited them to participate. The first interviewee was generous and sent an email to about 20 Muslim leaders in Melbourne, in which she introduced me and encouraged them to take part. That was a good start and I managed to interview several people from that list. I also asked the respondents to introduce other people. Overall, I managed to interview 18 people in Melbourne. This number was not adequate. Moreover, Sydney hosts the major population of Muslim communities, so I decided to travel to Sydney and continue the recruitment and interviews there.

I planned a two-week trip for February 2011, but could not begin contacting Sydney Muslim leaders due to uncertainty about funding. Unfortunately, I was informed of funding approval only a week ahead of my planned trip, and had little time to make appointments with potential participants. However, I managed to set up appointments with five
candidates prior to the trip. In Sydney, Muslim leaders were helpful in connecting me with others. They called or emailed other leaders and encouraged them to participate. In one case, Ikebal Patal, president of Australian Federation of Islamic Councils—the peak body of Muslim organisations in Australia—invited me to a meeting between the Australian Bureau of Statistic (ABS) and Sydney Muslim community leaders. This meeting had been requested by the ABS to ask Muslim leaders to encourage their communities to respond to the voluntary question about religion in the 2011 census. The meeting was held in the Malek Fahd Islamic School, the largest Islamic school in Australia. I met and arranged an interview with one of the Muslim leaders at that meeting.

I managed to recruit 12 people in total in Sydney. I met them at universities, Islamic centres, cafés, homes and NGO centres. Most interviews were conducted in western Sydney, particularly in Auburn and Lakemba, which host the largest groups of Australian Muslims. This trip was a good chance for me to travel around western Sydney and gain first-hand experience of Muslim residential areas. In general, I was successful in interviewing twelve people in a short stay in Sydney. I suggest that this was partly because I was considered by the interviewees to be an ‘insider’.

RESEARCHER AS AN INSIDER

Researchers are not value free. They are ontologically situated and their worldview is influenced by their gender, age, biography, class, ethnicity, race, location and religion. These factors are embedded in the researcher’s selection of a research topic. The mere fact that a topic is appealing to a researcher reveals some of the underlying values and worldview of the researcher. It is therefore important to critically analyse the social position of the researcher and its impact on the selection of topic, sampling, interviewing and the interpretation of data. This critical self-understanding and self-evaluation helps to unravel the epistemological assumptions of the knowledge produced. This also releases us from ‘unreflexive positivism’ (Reinharz 1997, p.18).
First of all, I am Iranian. Iran is a Muslim majority country, and by and large Shi’a. Iran has gained a unique position in the Muslim world since the Islamic revolution in 1979. In the second half of the twentieth century, political Islam experienced considerable growth in Muslim countries but triumphed only in Iran (Roy 1994a). The anti-American, anti-Israel and anti-West propaganda of the Islamic Republic of Iran have won it a reputation in the Muslim world. In some cases, such as the *Salman Rushdie* affair, Iran has managed to project itself as the avant-garde Islamic country and leading guardian and defender of Islam. It should be noted, however, that Iran’s majority population is Shi’a, which is a minority in the Muslim world (around 15 per cent). Shi’as and Sunnis have had religious and historical conflicts which limit Iran’s capacity for Muslim leadership across the world.

I revealed my ethnic background in the first email I sent to the participants. This was deliberately done to raise the likelihood of positive responses. Because of Muslim discontent regarding the portrayal of Islam in the media, Muslim leaders are generally cautious in their media relations. Some researchers have noted the difficulty of getting Muslim leaders to sit for interviews because of their misgivings about the accurate representation of their ideas (Elzain 2008). By mentioning my background I hoped to gain their trust. The high number of positive responses I received was presumably a result of this approach. Moreover, my name (Mohammad Hadi) is an obvious Islamic name and carried an ‘insider’ message at first glance.

My ethnic background led me to be accepted as a community member. This was evident in the replies to my first invitation emails. Many Muslim leaders used Islamic terms such as ‘Assalumu Alaykum’ (Hello) in their responses. One respondent wrote, ‘There is also the chance that I might be on hajj’. He did not explain what Hajj means, assuming that I understood it (Hajj is the pilgrimage to Mecca). Another respondent replied ‘I would see u next week 28-3-11 after asr’ without explaining what ‘asr’ means (it is the afternoon prayer). They would have explained these terms or used other words if they had not assumed I was familiar with them. This shows that the mere indication of being an Iranian (and having the name Mohammad) led them to consider me as part of their community.
Regarding me as an insider flowed throughout all stages of the research. In cases where I went to an Islamic centre, I was treated as part of the community. My Middle Eastern face was enough for me to be considered a Muslim by the surrounding people and by the interviewees. The participants felt comfortable with linking me to other Muslim leaders. Some of the interviewees added my name to their email lists and sent emails to me about Islamic events later. I received a few emails inviting me to Islamic seminars held by Islamic organisations. Others sent general emails about Muslim-related issues around the world. All these instances reveal a level of trust and connectedness between the researcher and participants. Interestingly, this happened in spite of the fact that I did not mention anything about myself unless it was relevant or I was asked. I tried to avoid talking about myself as much as possible for the sake of neutrality.

I was considered an insider in both the recruitment and interviewing processes. Interviewees felt comfortable criticising Muslim communities, often making statements such as, ‘we have such problems’ in a way that made me feel included in the ‘we’. I suspect they would not have been as open had they been interviewed by a non-Muslim. They justified their position by reference to the Quran or Islamic traditions without explaining the terminology because they presumed I understood them. At some points, when referring to Islamic principles, they went further and said that a Shi’a thinks the same thing. Obviously, they wanted to include me because as an Iranian they assumed I was a Shi’a. During interviews, when the dialogue veered towards Muslim cultures, they usually shortened their statements by saying, ‘you know that’. My English accent also revealed that I am a relative newcomer to Australia. They often asked when I had arrived in Australia and if I had been living in Iran beforehand. This usually led to some discussions about Iran and the Middle East prior to or after the interview.

**DATA COLLECTION**

I adopted semi-structured interviewing as the research tool in this study. The interviews lasted between 40 minutes and two hours. I usually started by asking the participant to talk about themselves and the type of their involvement with Muslim communities. I continued
the conversation with a general question such as, ‘What are the main issues with Muslims in Australia?’ I tried to run the interview as a conversation while at the same time covering the themes of the interview schedule. I would finish each interview by asking, ‘Is there anything else you would like to add?’ I also made field notes about such things as the place of the interview to help me remember the scene when listening to the interview recording later.

Locations for the interviews were diverse, and I tried to fit in with the participants’ preferences in this regard. I interviewed some respondents in Islamic centres and organisations. Others asked to meet in cafés or restaurants near Islamic centres and I noticed that these cafés and restaurants were frequented by Muslims and usually served Halal food. I met some of the interviewees in their workplaces at universities, NGOs, Islamic schools, and companies. Three participants invited me to their house, and I interviewed two by email. The diversity of locations reflects the diversity of the participants’ jobs and positions. Some worked full-time in Muslim community centres, but most had other jobs and their involvement with the community was voluntary.

In addition to interviews, I obtained data from the media and the websites of Muslim organisations. In the following chapters, I quote from newspaper articles, TV programs, statements of Muslim groups, and press releases by Muslim organisations. It is obvious that the media are selective in their reporting. They choose issues that are newsworthy. Manoff and Schudson (1986, p.6) claimed that journalism does not simply represent the reality, but is ‘operating out of its own conventions and understandings and within its own set of sociological, ideological, and literary constraints’. Media representations should therefore be taken as constructs rather than facts.

The core of my data comes from the interviews, and I use a number of quotes from the media to complement my arguments about the normalisation processes. I make reference to news of events in the media, notably the Sydney protest in 2012. In these cases, I cross-checked the news of the major Australian media outlets with websites of Muslim organisations and confined my descriptions to the consensual aspects of these events, in order to minimise the potential bias inherent in media coverage. For example, in the
coverage of a violent incident that occurred in Perth, I claimed that the media unanimously framed it as an ‘out of control party’. In this case, I examined the websites of major media outlets. In situations where media representations were in focus, I investigated the websites of various newspapers and TV networks, and their various types of framing. Where media material was used to describe an incident, I have selected consensual aspects of the incident without questioning media representations.

In Chapter Eight, I provide two case studies. I examined two Muslim organisations: *Hizb ut-Tahrir (HTA) Australia* and *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamm‘ah Association of Australia (ASWJAA)*. These organisations, I argue, decelerate normalisation processes put forward by integrationist Muslim leaders. I explore their discourses and strategies vis-à-vis normalisation processes. I do not aim to offer a comprehensive organisational analysis. Instead, I adopt a particular angle in investigating these groups. I look into these organisations through the social identity theory described earlier. I examine the discourses and activities of these groups that impact on the image of Islam and Muslims in the Australian public sphere.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

Miles and Huberman (1994, p.10) claimed that ‘the strength of qualitative data rests very centrally on the competence with which their analysis is carried out’. They suggested that data analysis is a process containing data reduction and data display. Data reduction is ‘a process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions’ (p.10). Data display is ‘an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action’ (p.11). I used thematic and discourse analyses in organising, classifying and explaining the data. Thematic analysis is a way of summarising and organising data based around themes. In other words, the transcripts are broken into pieces (could be a sentence, a paragraph or a number of paragraphs) which are then clustered around themes. I used NVivo software to record recurring themes. Coding is a process in which labels are assigned to bits of data. A code could either be factual or interpretive. Factual coding is effective in terms of
consistency and reliability, but may not be analytically advantageous. I used a mix of factual and interpretive codes. These codes were not mutually exclusive, and some quotes were assigned two or more codes.

I have coded the transcripts inductively (Miles & Huberman 1994; Thomas 2006). I began by tentatively coding the first transcript. In coding the second, I added new codes to the coding table as new themes emerged. Often a new code overlapped with a pre-existing code, in which case I combined them and re-named the code. If I found that a code was loaded, I split it into two or more codes. By ‘loaded’ codes, I refer to those that could be split conceptually into narrower codes. This way, the coding scheme was cumulatively built up. This is the opposite of deductive coding, where a coding scheme is constructed in the beginning and all data are coded accordingly. To make sense of the data, it is essential that codes and themes are brought together within a broader conceptual and theoretical framework. The outcome of the analysis is a model or a broad framework in which codes find a meaningful place. While thematic analysis helps to identify recurring themes, discourse analysis is helpful to relate themes to underlying social conditions.

Discourse is ‘a way of speaking’ (Foucault 1972, p.193). It is a text or a speech produced within and influenced by the power structure of its social context. Fairclough (2001, p.20) defined discourse as the following:

The whole process of social interaction of which a text is just a part. This process includes in addition to the text the process of production, of which the text is a product, and the process of interpretation, for which the text is a resource.

Discourse analysis includes three dimensions: description, interpretation, and explanation (Fairclough 2001, p.21-22). In other words, discourse analysis goes beyond mere description of the properties of the text and examines the relationship between the text and its wider social, cultural, and political contexts. It reveals the social processes that enable the production of a text in a certain form and style. For instance, to understand what Muslim leaders say and why, it is essential to consider the political environment in which they speak. Muslim identity has been demonised in western public discourses. Muslim
leaders talk in a political climate where they feel their identity is not recognised and respected. This context flows into what Muslim leaders say and how they say it.

Chapters Seven and Eight discuss the discursive aspects of normalisation processes. Discourse analysis was utilised to deconstruct the narratives and reveal the relationships between what participants have said and the wider social and political environment. In Chapter Six, I explain the ‘organisational aspects’ of normalisation processes. I describe the ways in which integrationist leaders attempt to apply structural adjustments to the leadership structure to control ‘deviant’ voices and facilitate the production of ‘normal’ voices. It should be noted that interview data are always ‘narratives’ and ‘stories’ that people set forth about social matters. They should not be treated as ‘facts’. Chapter Six therefore reports Muslim leaders’ ‘narratives’ about the organisational strategies they adopt. The same is true of Chapter Nine, in which I explain the strategies evoked by Muslim leaders to influence media discourses about Islam. They are the ‘narratives’ of the participants about their strategies, and not facts.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explained the methodological aspects pertinent to sampling, recruitment, interviewing, data analysis, confidentiality and epistemological matters. The complexity of the subject and the research questions rendered the qualitative method appropriate. Maximum diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity and political views was sought to obtain a more representative sample. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and most participants chose to be cited using their real names.

There are limitations to the findings of this study. Only two Muslim leaders holding extremist opinions were interviewed. Although an attempt was made to supplement interview data with information from websites as well as media articles, these cannot replace in-depth interviews, which allow researchers to probe deeper and elicit more spontaneous responses. Moreover, all respondents were Sunni—no Shi’a leader was interviewed. Therefore the data are not generalisable to Shi’a leaders. It can be intuitively
argued that there is no reason why Shi’as would think differently about the dominant media and political discourses. Nonetheless, it is highly likely that the Sunni/Shi’s division complicates the dynamics of Muslim leadership and adds a new layer of complexity.
CHAPTER FIVE: THE NORMALISATION PROCESS AND ITS
ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS

INTRODUCTION

The social integration of stigmatised people into broader society can be defined as a process of normalisation. It is a process through which stigmatised people find a status comparable with other mainstream members of society whereby they are not viewed and treated in a pejorative manner. Australian Muslims have long been subject to racist and derogatory discourses in sections of the media, and by conservative politicians and right-wing public commentators. Many Australian Muslim leaders are concerned about these discourses and struggle to influence and change them. They aim to depict Islam as compatible with Australian culture. They are concerned about Muslims’ public image, and their efforts for the elimination of negative discourses have dramaturgical aspects. Dramaturgical actions seek to manage one’s image in the mind of the audience (Goffman 1959). Leaders’ efforts are subject to general rules of ‘presentation of self’ and ‘impression management’, as masterfully described by Goffman (1959).

A successful presentation of self requires having control over the information available to the audience (Goffman 1959). To be successful, integrationist Muslim leaders have to shape the Muslim-related information that reaches the public. They have to develop structures that allow for the easier production of ‘normal’ Muslim voices and the control of radical voices. In this way, radical and provocative Muslim voices are heard minimally in the public and Muslims come to be viewed as ordinary Australian groups. This means that the normalisation process requires some changes or adjustments in leadership structure. The normalisation process is intrinsically a dramaturgical process and can be examined from various perspectives. This chapter reports on the organisational aspects of the normalisation process. In the next chapter, I explain the discursive aspects of the normalisation process.

The chapter also delves into several initiatives and strategies undertaken by integrationist Muslim leaders, which are often supported and funded by the Australian government. One such initiative has been the regulation of Imams’ voices. Imams are religious leaders and lead prayers in mosques. Australian Imams have provoked public outrage several times in
recent decades. Through the establishment of the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC), there has been an attempt to normalise Imams’ voices. This organisation was intended to act as a self-regulatory body for Imams. There have also been efforts to encourage Muslim women and youth to take leadership positions.

It is often assumed by Muslims that when compared to first generation Muslims, second-generation Muslims are more competent at English and have more cultural capital, and that this would enable them to engage more efficiently with broader society. As mentioned, Muslim women have also been encouraged to take leadership positions and act as Muslim spokespeople. This is particularly important in a climate where Islam is portrayed as being oppressive to women. Muslim women leaders and spokespeople presumably challenge these perceptions. Moreover, there have been efforts by integrationist leaders to enhance internal communication between Muslim leaders of separate groups in order to produce a more coordinated and united Muslim voice.

These strategies seek to normalise the image of Australian Muslims in the public sphere. As argued earlier, normality is a social construct. The power differential between minorities and the majority is a determinant factor in setting the definition of the ‘norm’ and ‘normal’. With its executive arms (state, media and education), the majority is able to set the normative systems upon which others are judged. Therefore, the normalisation process entails being compatible with the dominant social, cultural and political norms. The dominant discourses in Australia are pro-democracy, secular and liberal. This means that a ‘normal’ Muslim voice must be compatible with these ideologies. I start by discussing what social integration means to Muslim leaders and highlight its dramaturgical nature.

**Social integration as a normalisation process**

I argued earlier that Islam has been historically constructed in opposition to the West. This historical construction was intensified by the September 11 attacks. Muslims are not only viewed as being culturally incompatible with the West, but as a threat to it, and September 11 heightened this image of Muslim menace. Following the attacks, Australian Muslims
experienced a wave of negative coverage in the public and became the target of racist behaviours (HREOC 2004). The intense climate of post-September 11 was raised and discussed by most participants in this study. They felt that in this era they had been put under the ‘microscope’ and that this had made them ‘defensive’.

Khaled Sukkarieh, Chairman of the Islamic Council of Australia:

We didn’t come here [to Australia] for anything other than a nice normal life; we didn’t come here to be put into under a microscope and to be always watched … So instead of working normally and trying to contribute to society, Muslims have become defensive, because they would consider that [public discourses] as an attack on them … In the last ten years, I’ve had to defend myself … We are not like that [terrorists]! … We [Muslims] weren’t smart enough, weren’t as organised, or as supportive of each other, or united to face this propaganda— not necessarily propaganda, but the perception that was out there. So from the Muslim perspective, I would say we got caught short; we weren’t prepared.

Keysar Trad, President of the Islamic Friendship Association:

The media are saying that Muslims don’t integrate. They don’t feel part of society. They isolate themselves and are very insular. They want to change our values; they want to tear down our values … There was also filtering down to some of the frontline police, when they see a group of young Muslims in the street. They come and see what is going on, and start talking to them in a very [negative] manner … We have seen teachers becoming less tolerant with [Muslim] children, and young people are feeling alienated. They want to go to school, go to work, and being normal like anybody else, but society is saying to them: I don’t trust you!

Fatima, a Muslim public commentator:

Life has been very different following September 11. The microscope is very closely imposed upon Australian Muslims in a way that it has not with previous migrant experiences. So that’s one very distinct factor. Also, the media are focused
on and obsessed with the Australian Muslim experience. This has very much informed the way we go about living our lives in Australia.

These quotes illustrate the intensity of the situation for Australian Muslims in the post-September 11 era. Several interviewees said that the rise of Islamophobia in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks has motivated them to become active politically:

Sherene Hassan, Secretary and Board member of the Islamic Council of Victoria:

After September 11, I felt compelled to get involved with the Muslim community. Prior to that, I had little involvement with it. I was more concerned with bringing up my children, and with my family and work. I was living in Adelaide at the time, where Muslim presence was quite limited, and I was very frustrated with the way Islam was being portrayed in the media, and very frustrated with our Muslim spokespeople. So I got involved.

Khaled Sukkarieh:

We would not accept any of the things happening overseas, but all of a sudden, we started to hear things, and people were looking at us differently. Pre-2001, people didn’t really care, but post-2001, it was a time for action; it was time to show people that we are not like that! [We are not terrorists!]

These quotes show how overseas events can have local implications. The Howard government took part in the War on Terror and the Australian media increased their pejorative discourses about Australian Muslims. In such an environment, integrationist leaders have had to strive to respond to the dominant discourses. A central part of their effort has been directed towards influencing public discourses about Islam and Muslims. Muslims in general, and Muslim leaders in particular, are very concerned about media misrepresentations of Islam. They are frustrated with their public image. This implies that the problem, and possibly the solution, is of a dramaturgical nature. They have sought to normalise their image and remove the stigma attached to it. The audience, in this context, is the mainstream Australian population:

Sherene Hassan:
I think before September 11, Muslims tended to be a little more insular, more concerned with Muslim activities. I think after September 11, there has been a drive to sort of “come out of the closet” and try and reclaim Islam. So mosques started having open days. Muslims started to get involved in activities with non-Muslims, charities being run by Muslims and the like. It was an opportunity for Muslims to reclaim Islam to try to get involved with the wider community more, and to simply get to know their neighbours which is very much emphasised in Islamic teachings but often forgotten. There were Muslims who had neighbours for 15 years and hadn’t even bothered to introduce themselves. Many felt the need to present Islam in a much more positive manner.

Nazid Kimmie, a prominent Muslim artist, described his activities in the ‘You Am I’ art exhibition held by the Islamic Council of Victoria:

The exhibition was held in a very public space—a library—so there was an interface, mostly with non-Muslims, but with Muslims as well. Non-Muslims were the Islamic Council of Victoria’s primary focus when they initiated the project … Some of the exhibition works were photographs and those photographs were mostly of Muslim families doing very Australian things.

_Hadi_: What do you mean by Australian things?

_Nazid Kimmie:_

Well, typical Australian things like playing the local version of football, barbeques, and things generally considered being very Australian in the colloquial way of enjoying and exhibiting your culture. And so you get a lot of people who have never met Muslims or Muslim Australians before who see this and see the art work, and stop … and this gets conversations going without having a lot of loaded baggage of the political stuff.

These quotes demonstrate the dramaturgical nature of efforts made by Muslim leaders and organisations. Most participants emphasised the importance of communication between
Muslims and non-Muslims in contributing to the removal of misconceptions. Khaled Sukkareih described a program by the Islamic Council of NSW that involved inviting non-Muslims to Iftar [dinner] during holy Ramadan. He said that the Council encouraged ordinary Muslims to invite their non-Muslim neighbours to their homes during Ramadan to familiarise them with Islam. Similarly, Keysar Trad described a barbeque they had held in a Sydney public park at which 5,000 Muslims and non-Muslims were in attendance. He viewed such programs as influential in presenting a positive image of Islam to non-Muslims. Interestingly, Fatima suggested that she would be prepared to go to a pub and talk to non-Muslims if it was helpful in dispelling stereotypes about Islam:

*Fatima:*

But for instance if I go to a pub and have a conversation with someone, if that means that helped dispel a stereotype, in the long run, that would be far more productive than staying home and refusing to engage in that dialogue altogether.

This shows just how important the integrationist leaders think it is to change the perceptions of non-Muslims, because Muslims generally do not drink and do not go to pubs. Dialogue and interactions with non-Muslim audiences may therefore require compromises, as indicated in this quote. The aim of such actions is to present a normal face of Muslims to non-Muslims.

Integrationist leaders believe that a minority of Muslim extremists have affected the image of mainstream Muslims. They believe that the media covers extremists in a way that is out of proportion with their numbers or influence. They are therefore seeking to divert the focus of the media away from Muslims. Muslims want to be viewed as ‘normal like anybody else’, as Keysar Trad put it. Their efforts purport to communicate to the public that Muslims ‘are not all wife beaters, they are just normal people who don’t drink or do drink—most Muslims do drink!’ as Kamal, a Muslim leader, said. If Muslims are conferred with normal status, they are far less likely to be singled out in the media and in political discourses:

*Nazid Kimmie:*
The ultimate goal in years to come would be to be invisible. We would be part of the fabric; your traditional religion would just be part of who you are as an Australian citizen—that is the goal. The people you brought up before—academics and the social elite, are aiming for that. They are using the point of difference [negative public image of Muslims] that sets us apart, to eventually make their role obsolete.

The aim of integrationist leaders is to remove the power gaze from Muslims so that Muslims become invisible, or ‘part of the fabric’. Nazid Kimmie did not mean that at the end of this process the cultural visibility of Muslims (e.g. hijab or mosques) would have completely disappeared. Rather, he meant that Muslims should become so integrated, so normal, that they would be able to practise their religion freely, as do members of other religions, without being demonised and treated as ‘un-Australian’. They want to be ‘invisible’ to the gaze of power. Power, Foucault (1995, p.187) argued, is ‘exercised through its invisibility’ while ‘at the same time, it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility’. The visibility of subjects ‘assures the hold of power that is exercised over them’ and examination is the ‘technique’ by which power ‘objectifies’ its subjects.

This goal is acceptable to all Australian Muslim leaders who were interviewed; nonetheless, there was not a consensus as to which methods should be employed to this end. Yassir Morsi, President of Victoria’s Muslim Student Association, criticised integrationist leaders, claiming they have fully accepted the power structure of Australian society and are happy to passively adapt to what is considered normal in Australia:

The way they [integrationist leaders] do this is really demeaning, in the sense that they try to affirm some normality [by saying:], “We are not terrorists, we work at banks, and we are high school teachers”, or, “I like footie”. I hate that, as if there is a sense of normal and normality. What happens to those Muslims who aren’t quite ‘normal’? You are effectively selling them out when you say things like, “You are in a football team, good for you!”, or, “You are articulate!” What about the ones who don’t speak English very well? Those who are living in flats, driving taxis …
This is effectively saying that they are not integrated; they are not Australian … The [Muslim] characters on TV, they are very well integrated, highly educated, articulate, intelligent, well-to-do Muslims. They are not from that part of the community that has [economic] problems … I think they are trying to create a space for themselves by saying, “Look! We are not like Osameh Bin Laden! We are not like the Taliban!”

Yassir Morsi linked the class position and cultural competency of integrationist leaders to their will to integrate. He preferred a critical approach towards Australian culture and politics over passive adaptation. It seems that the integrationist leaders have more or less accepted the political institutions of Australia and feel comfortable identifying with them. They seek to highlight similarities between Muslims and non-Muslims to suggest that they can coexist peacefully. They believe that the current picture of Muslims in the public sphere impedes the process of integration, and they seek to influence and change this image. But these efforts cannot succeed unless they manage to control those voices that altogether reject the idea of integration. To be able to influence majority views, integrationist leaders must be able to project a consistent and positive public voice. They have strived to develop structures to ease the production of more ‘normal’ voices and to contain those that are radical. They have focused particularly on the voices of Imams, because in several instances in recent years, these have been provocative.

THE NORMALISATION OF IMAMS’ VOICES

Over the last two decades, and particularly after the September 11 attacks, there has been a rising debate over the nature of Islam and its compatibility with democracy, liberalism, secularism, freedom of expression and freedom of religion. The dominant Orientalist discourses associate Islam with terrorism, violence and patriarchy, and ‘Islamic terrorism’ is used as both a description and an explanation (Mamdani 2004). Not only Muslims, but also Islam, are said to be in crisis (Lewis 2003). This frame of debate has assigned an important place to those who are deemed to be most knowledgeable about Islamic teachings. In the Australian public sphere, as in other parts of the West, Imams are
frequently consulted and interviewed by journalists about Islam’s position on terrorism, democracy, modernity and other such issues. Australian Imams, however, have not proven efficient in their communication with western audiences. They are often overseas born, have language deficiencies, and lack the cultural capital necessary for effective communication. In several instances, their ignorance about western cultural and political sensitivities has provoked public outrage.

Most Imams in Australia come from overseas to manage mosques and lead prayers. They have not been trained for the media engagement and political commentary to which they are exposed. Nayeefa Chowdhury, the founding director of an Internet-based Islamic information service (Light of Islam), suggested that Imams’ role in Australia is mostly mosque leadership. They lead prayers five times a day, run Islamic study sessions for children and youth and participate in interfaith dialogues. She maintained that the role of the Imam is ‘ceremonial not sacerdotal’. Imams continue to play a part in community affairs because mosques function partly as social hubs for Muslims, especially during religious festivals such as Eid al-Fitr (end of Ramadan celebration). Monique Toohey, a Muslim community activist who has worked with and researched on Australian Imams, indicated that Imams do not play a central role in Islamic education in Australia. She suggested that there are a lot of Islamic scholars not considered Imams who have taken the lead in disseminating Islamic knowledge.

Most participants in this study were dissatisfied with Imams’ linguistic deficiencies and lack of knowledge about the Australian cultural and political environment. This affirms the results of large-scale studies that have demonstrated dissatisfaction by ordinary Muslims and Muslim leaders with Imams’ performance in Australia (e.g. Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia 2010; Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2007). Imams’ lack of English skills and awareness of Australian culture has led many Muslims to think that Muslim leadership should centre on community organisations rather than religious ones (Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia 2010). Omer Atila, Executive Advisor at the Australian Intercultural Society, claimed that whenever Muslims built a mosque or an Islamic centre, they brought in an Imam from overseas who was often not successful in establishing effective communication with Muslim youth and broader
society. Aziz Cooper, Prison Chaplaincy Co-ordinator at the Islamic Council of Victoria, asserted that most of his clients ‘are fed up with the Imams and the religious leaders of the community, whether they are Imams or Muslim bureaucrats’. He attributed this frustration to the fact that Imams cannot relate to the issues that Australian Muslim youth are facing, such as alcohol, nightclubbing and drugs. But the dissatisfaction was not limited to the linguistic and cultural literacy of Imams, but also to the political implications of Imams’ voices.

In a political climate in which Muslims are under close scrutiny from the media, the indelicate words of some Imams have led to sensational media stories. A number of the interviewees narrated incidents where the media coverage of some Imam’s sermons inflamed public debates about Islam. A prime example was the provocative words of Sheikh Hilaly, a renowned Imam from Sydney’s Lakemba mosque. In an Arabic sermon in 2001, he criticised immodest western women’s dress, and indirectly attributed responsibility for rape to women, saying: ‘If you take out uncovered meat and place it outside on the street, or in the garden or in the park, or in the backyard without a cover, and the cats come and eat it ... whose fault is it, the cats’ or the uncovered meat?’ (Kerbaj 2006). His comments evoked a media campaign against him and raised heated debates about the place of women in Islam. Kuranda Seyit, the founder of the Forum on Australia’s Islamic Relations (FAIR), referred to a study conducted after Hilaly’s speech:

And the best example of that is Sheikh Taj El-Din Hilaly and his comments about the cat and the meat. This was a big story and we analysed it. It was one of the biggest stories ever in the Muslim community. There was a comparison made between the number of stories in the month before he made those comments and the month after. In the month before, there were about 40 stories in the media about Muslims including international material. In the month following his comments, there were over 1,600 stories about Islam that referred to Sheikh Taj El-Din Hilaly’s comments.

Hilaly’s speech was frequently mentioned by the research participants as an example of inflammatory commentary. Imams by and large perform within mosques and mostly speak
to Muslim audiences; however, their words may also be sought out and reported by journalists. A number of the interviewees pointed out that some journalists target Imams in order to extract words that will produce sensational stories. Tasneem Chopra, President of the Islamic Women’s Welfare Council of Victoria, said that the media are very selective in giving voice to Muslim leaders:

The spokespersons for the Muslim community haven’t always been selected by the community, but have been approached by the media. And I think that is one of the biggest problems we have had—self-appointed spokespersons. This has not been very helpful. In fact, it has been quite unhelpful. Often people are coming on television—particularly imams, random imams and sheikhs—misrepresenting the Muslim community, and making quite inflammatory comments, which are not always related to the War on Terror and Australia’s involvement in foreign countries but also on issues of women, the perception of women in Islam, and their role and status. As a result, other spokespersons constantly have to correct the misconceptions in reaction. So there is not much time for really promoting or pro-activeness because so much of our energy is spent on damage control and reactive measures.

Dissatisfaction with Imams’ voices has led the leaders to organise a number of initiatives aimed at normalising their voice. With the aid of integrationist leaders, the Australian government has played an important role in this. ‘Taming’ Imams has been a strategy adopted by other western governments as well. For example, Haddad and Balz (2008) asserted that European governments have devised policies to promote ‘Euro-friendly Imams’. These policies have included the deportation of radical Imams, surveillance of mosques and education programs for Imams. There have been similar policies in Australia. For instance, the deportation of Imams is evident in the case of Sydney Imam Mansour Leghaei, who was accused of spying for Iran (Minus 2010). In terms of training and education for Imams, the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship has established programs for religious workers to educate them about the ‘Australian way of life’ (Wall 2011). Mosques and other religious centres are also constantly watched by
Australian intelligence organisations (Zwartz 2012c). Probably the most important action carried out under the National Action Plan has been to organise a national body of Imams.

Imams usually work in isolation from each other and engage mainly with their own mosques. They have not had the opportunity to learn about broader political and social issues. To overcome this, there have been attempts to institute gatherings for Imams so that they can share knowledge and coordinate their views and activities. Such gatherings could potentially cause their ideas to converge. Social psychological studies have shown that when people come together, they compare themselves with others, particularly with influential members, and in this environment, divergence is likely to reduce. The pressures towards uniformity lead to the convergence of ideas (Festinger 1954). The resulting voice would reflect the average (or ‘normal’) ideas and marginalise the outliers. The establishment of the Australian National Imams Councils (ANIC) served such a purpose. The ANIC was established to ‘streamline the activities of Imams in Australia’ and to be the responsible body for the ‘regulatory affairs for the Imams in all Australian states’ (Australian National Imams Council 2006, 2007). Hass Dellal, President of the Australian Multicultural Foundation, commented on this issue:

How do we actually bring Imams together? My organisation [Australian Multicultural Foundation] was the first. The government was very supportive of our idea, because they wanted it as well. We both wanted it, so they approached us to see if we could actually put this together, and we did. We brought together 140 Imams in Sydney at the first national conference of Imams in Australia. That produced some very good advice and recommendations which helped in forming the National Action Plan and the work with Imams.

Dellal considered this conference to be a good space to ‘provide reasonable voices’. This implies the existence of ‘unreasonable’ or ‘deviant’ voices among Imams, which are not aligned with the Australian cultural and political environment. Poynting and Mason (2008) indicated that the ANIC supported the Howard Citizenship Test, called for the accreditation of all Imams by this organisation, and asked all Imams to deliver their sermons in English.
The ANIC was established in 2006 but has not been very active since then. Nonetheless, on occasion they have attempted to exert control on Islamic issues in Muslim communities. For instance, in 2011, they opposed the programs of an Islamic radio station that was broadcasting very conservative ideas. The Grand Mufti of Australia was reported to have advised that the station:

adheres to a doctrine that would lead many Muslims to feel that they are being accused of blasphemy and apostasy ... This is a very serious matter within our community and can lead to people being shunned and families being split. This leads to a serious erosion of the very social fabric of our community’. (O'Brien 2011)

The ANIC, then, issued a statement requesting Australian authorities not to renew the Muslim radio station’s licence. Integrationist Muslim leaders have also conducted media training for Imams to enhance their skills in engaging with the media. They are trained to be careful about their language and not to generalise from precarious base. The workshops aim to sensitise Imams to their language. I suggested to Dellal, who has been active in holding such workshops, that the workshops seemed to aim to change the Imams’ language and not their attitudes. Hass Dellal replied that ‘their opinions are very hard to change’. The focus of integrationist leaders is on the public image of Islam and Muslims. Such programs do not purport to change the opinions or views of Imams because they are not religious classes. These programs aim rather just to sensitise Imams to their language in order to educate them not to be provocative. In so doing, Imams’ voices are normalised in the Australian public sphere.

There have also been state-supported initiatives to produce local Imams who would presumably be familiar with Australian culture and politics. Local Imams supposedly possess the cultural capital necessary for the establishment of effective communication with wider society. Omer Atila described a program aimed at nurturing local Imams in Sydney:

We are now taking new steps to fix that as well, producing our own Imams here, producing our own Islamic lecturers ... We are beginning our new program in Sydney at Charles Sturt University ... I think it is a three-year course in Islamic
studies. They will become Imams, so we will have English-speaking Imams raised in Australia in this culture, and they will be addressing Muslims in mosques and other places. I think that is a big step towards integration as well.

Similarly, Bilal Cleland, former Secretary of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC), noted:

There is a new body of imams developing. They are educated here and are fluent in English—really good examples of Islamic leadership. We had big problems previously, making provocative and stupid comments—Mr Hilaly.

In these quotes, we see an emphasis on ‘fluent English, ‘raised in Australia’, and ‘raised in this culture’. These reveal the sources of concern among integrationist leaders. Interestingly, there was little mention of a need for ‘Islamic reform’. It seemed that, for most participants in this study, if Imams could speak good English and possess adequate cultural capital, the ‘problem of integration’ would almost be solved. In contrast with the dominant Orientalist discourses that depict Islam as essentially incompatible with the West, integrationist Muslim leaders view Islam as being malleable and adaptable to various cultures, including western culture. If Imams could speak fluent English and handle public debates in an ‘Australian’ way, they would not be considered ‘foreigners’. This implies that Islam per se is compatible with Australia—it just needs to be presented properly.

Another strategy utilised by integrationist leaders for controlling radical voices was the improvement of communication between separate Muslim groups and leaders. This internal communication was thought to produce a more coordinated, consistent, and harmonised Muslim voice in the Australian public sphere.

THE ENHANCEMENT OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Australian Muslim leadership is fragmented, with few communication channels existing among the various groups and leaders. This fragmentation inhibits their ability to coordinate a united voice. In a political climate where Muslim identity is severely
demonised, this lack of coordination has weakened the position and influence of Muslims in public debates. Muslims will not be able to influence public debates about themselves unless they are able to communicate a unified message to the public. Moscovici (1985) postulated that consistency is the key factor that enables a minority to influence the majority’s view. Goffman (1959) also showed that consistency is important for a successful presentation of self. To achieve successful management of the impression conveyed, a team has to be able to control those members who play discrepant roles. This is the challenge faced by integrationist leaders. They strive to craft a ‘willing-to-integrate’ image of Muslims in Australia’s public sphere; however, Muslim extremists raise contradictory voices, which are then used by some journalists to create sensational stories. The disproportionate media coverage of the radical voices affects the image of Muslims promoted by integrationist leaders. Because of this, integrationist leaders have tried to enhance internal communication between discrete Muslim groups with the hope of developing a more coordinated and united voice.

The coordination of various Muslim leaders has been difficult given the fragmented structure of Muslim leadership. It is fragmented along the lines of ethnicity, sect and political view. Interestingly, Sydney and Melbourne are quite different in this regard. In Sydney, the communication between the various sectors of Muslim leadership is closer and more frequent than in Melbourne. Kuranda Seyit compared Melbourne and Sydney Muslim leaders in terms of their communication style:

Melbourne is good because the funny thing in Melbourne is that conservative groups get along ok with the ICV [Islamic Council of Victoria]. Those people tend to just ignore one another. You know, they work together, they work in parallel … there is no friction. They work parallel to one another, so in a way they complement each other. They don’t necessarily share the same schools of thought, but they don’t attack each other and they aren’t against each other—they just work together. Whereas in Sydney it is everyone [for himself]; in Sydney you have about 20 to 50 different balls bouncing in a box, whereas there [in Melbourne], you’ve got two balls on a train track rolling along together.
The groups Kuranda Seyit referred to are the Islamic Council of Victoria (the main hub of integrationist leaders in Melbourne) and *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamm’ah Association of Australia* (the main Salafi group in Australia).

What is the reason for such a difference in communication styles? Ramzy Elseyed, Vice President of the Islamic Council of Victoria, suggested that the difference between Sydney and Melbourne may be related to the residential patterns of Muslims in the two cities. In Sydney, the majority of Muslims are concentrated in the western suburbs, while in Melbourne they spread across the city. Elseyed further maintained that the relationship between discrete Muslim groups in Melbourne has improved in the last five or six years. He mentioned that six years ago there were some provocative voices which sometimes triggered protests by far-right groups. Such incidents, Elseyed added, highlighted the need for better communication among Muslims leaders of separate groups. Sheikh Abu Ayman, founder of *the Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamma’h Association of Australia*, discussed his meetings with other Muslim leaders, including the ICV and government authorities:

So we started to have meetings. We sit together—Imams, leaders, societies used to do that. We promised to do this more often, but unfortunately time, money and various other issues make it not easy, but there is a lot of communication now—better than before—and that is what is good.

This quote shows that there have been attempts to establish channels of communication between Muslim leaders. The important point is that these meetings are not trying to dissolve political or religious differences, but to enhance coordination and unify the Muslim voice. This reveals the dramaturgical nature of such efforts. Dramaturgical actions are tailored to the audience. The audience here is non-Muslim Australians; therefore there is a preference for structures that seek to reflect a normal voice:

Kuranda Seyit:

There are a lot of [radical] organisations out there. They are talking about no voting, and no this and no that—they are just being more aggressive. This causes more friction in society, so they have to employ more Hikmah [wisdom] in getting their
message across. I know they are concerned about Muslims overseas and want to be more religious and all that, but they need to do it in such a way that it doesn’t undermine the system that already is in place, which everybody is happy with. Most people are happy with the system in Australia—they like it; it is a free, democratic, open society.

This quote demonstrates the concerns of integrationist Muslim leaders. They are concerned about voices that create ‘friction’ in society. They do not seek to change their ideas, but want them to be less provocative. Internal communication and dialogue may help to coordinate a more regular and consistent Muslim public voice. Ramzy Elseyed asserted that communication between Muslim groups has led to a division of labour:

They [Salafi groups] left a lot of engagement with the media to the Islamic Council of Victoria, so they recognised that this could be done as a group strategy, as a community strategy. And we have what we think is a fairly good track record… during the last three or four years, nothing really problematic has happened.

This quote illustrates a loose division of labour among Muslim groups, with the Islamic Council of Victoria taking a public speaking role. Here again we see that the goal of communication is not to influence each other’s religious views, but to coordinate a voice that is less problematic in the public sphere. In this framework, the ICV, with its mostly second-generation, young and educated members, is considered to be in a better position to communicate with wider society. By taking the lead in public speaking, they have sought to become more effective in promoting a positive and ‘willing-to-integrate’ image of Muslims. This was also mentioned by Akbarzadeh and Roose (2011, p.317), who introduced the ICV ‘as a buffer between more extreme elements of Muslim communities and wider Australia, on occasion filtering unrepeatable claims from the constituents’. To put it more concretely, the main problem with conservative groups, from the point of view of integrationist leaders, is their ‘voice’, not their attitudes. The coordination of Muslim voices has been progressing, and this is evident in the responses to the 2012 Sydney protest.
The case of the Sydney Protest in 2012

In September 2012, a few hundred Muslims gathered in the Sydney CBD to protest against an anti-Islam movie made in the United States by a Coptic American Egyptian. The protest turned violent and a number of participants clashed with the police. The incident received wide media coverage. Politicians and Muslim leaders from across the political spectrum condemned the violence. The day following the protest, Sydney Muslim leaders gathered in Lakemba mosque and issued a statement condemning the violence almost unanimously (The Canberra Times 2012). Even *Alus Sunnah wal Jamma’ah Association of Australia*, the ultra-conservative Salafi group, joined to condemn the violence. The united reaction of Muslim leaders was almost unprecedented, and Waleed Aly, a prominent Muslim figure, described it as a ‘watershed’ for Muslim leadership (Zwartz 2012b). Aly praised the ‘coherent media strategy’ of Sydney Muslim leaders who had often been ‘dysfunctional’ in the past. He congratulated Muslim leaders for being united and not ‘just shooting their mouths off and saying contradictory things’, as has been usual in the past. To Aly, ‘the real story is that Muslim community is finding its feet’ and not the story of the minority extremists. He stated that the diverse and fragmented fabric of Australian Muslim communities has not allowed for the development of ‘a coherent culture, but that changes over time’ (Zwartz 2012b). Sheikh Feiz, a prominent and provocative Salafi leader who was initially thought to have inspired the protest, condemned the violence saying: ‘Violent protest is forbidden in Islam’. He went even further in retreating from his past provocative statements:

> Life teaches you a lot of things, and they say it is only from experience that you become wise. Not that I retract what I said in the past, but I am now wiser than I was in the past. And the way I do things and say things, I’ve got to be exceptionally careful of—not scared of, but careful of—because I do not want to pass the wrong message across (Kilani 2012).

The only Muslim group who did not join the other groups in condemning the violence was *Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia* (Cubby, McNeillage & Bossi 2012). They issued a statement that
called attention to the sources of the protesters’ anger rather than merely condemning their actions:

We do not condone violent protest. However, we affirm that primary responsibility for what occurred lies squarely on the powerful institutions of society—media and the political establishment in particular—which continually attack Islam and Muslims, creating the grievances that give rise to such incidents, isolating youth, and causing social tension (*Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia* 2012a)

Soon after the Sydney protest, the news of a copycat protest in Melbourne in the following week went viral. Melbourne Muslim leaders took action to control the pace of events. An emergency meeting of the Victorian Board of Imams was held and they emailed, called, and asked all 36 Imams of Melbourne mosques to advise Muslim communities after prayers not to participate in the protest (Zwart 2012a). Some Muslim leaders did manage to convince the organiser of the Melbourne protest to cancel the event (Masanauskas 2012).

This incident showed that Muslim leadership, despite its fragmentation, has expanded its power to exert some control over events in Muslim communities. Their power has gone beyond symbolic levels to contain organisational and operational elements. Muslim leaders have enhanced their coordination and this has enabled them to react in a timely fashion to Muslim-related issues. So far, integrationist leaders have had the upper hand and have been able to direct the leadership field. They have also attempted to give voice to those segments of Muslim communities who are more likely to produce ‘normal’ voices. Muslim youth and Muslim women are two such groups.

**MUSLIM YOUTH LEADERSHIP**

Second and third-generation migrants can go in various directions as far as social integration is concerned. I described the segmented assimilation theory which is probably the best explanation for second-generation migrants’ integration with host societies (Portes and Zhou 1993). In regard to Muslim youth, we see that there are both hopes and concerns. On the one hand, a large segment of the second generation of Australian Muslims is well-
integrated. On the other hand, we hear of concerns over ‘home-grown terrorism’ in the media and in official policy documents (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2010).

As in other communities, intergenerational communication is a problem in Muslim communities. This problem is reflected in the field of Muslim leadership. Many Muslim youth complain about ‘old’ leaders not wanting let go of their power (Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia 2010). Many young Muslims are worried that current Muslim leaders lack ‘sufficient English language skills and a sound understanding of Islam in a modern context’ (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2007, p.17). Fatima pointed out that Muslim youth do not identify with first-generation Muslim leaders because they are ‘mainly men, very Arab, very traditional in their viewpoints’. She claimed that there is a ‘disconnect’ between these leaders and young Muslims. Monique Toohey, who was involved with the National Summit for Muslim Youth, suggested that there is an absolute need to transfer leadership to the youth in Muslim communities. This has not been adequately addressed because, in Toohey’s view, first-generation Muslims have a traditional hierarchical mentality. They hold onto power and are unwilling to relinquish it:

We have to carry leaders out in the coffin for them to give up leadership. This is a very traditional view of leadership like Asian and Arab views: when someone dies, the next person comes in, but that can’t work here. Unless you are showing results you will be ousted.

Toohey said that second and third-generation Muslims function better in leadership positions because they feel Australian:

[They were] born here and know the system. They are not intimidated by the system. They probably say that it’s their right to live here and to be successful here and to advocate really well, because they do not have any inferiority complex. They say: “We are Australian, you are Australian; that is fine, we have rights, you have rights!” And I think that is really what the community has needed for a long time.
The confidence Toohey alluded to results from the cultural capital Muslim youth possess. Their mastery of the English language and familiarity with Australian cultural and social norms give them confidence in their engagement and interactions with wider society. They are ‘less foreigners’, because they were born and socialised in Australia and can claim Australia as their home. This point was embedded in many participants’ comments:

Randa Abdel-Fattah, A prominent Muslim writer and public commentator:

The new generation of Muslims is especially engaging in innovative ways to overcome the stereotypes and prejudice, and is not tolerating any suggestion that they are somehow ‘discount’ Australians. I see a brighter future where Muslims enjoy wider access to the mainstream media and public space.

Kuranda Seyit:

In Australia it is very practical, it is very feasible, because you have to remember that the new generation of Muslim Australians, who were either born here or came here as babies, and grew up and were educated here, they don’t have the baggage of their parents. They don’t have the emotional and cultural baggage that has caused some of the divisions. So a lot of young Muslims under the age of 30 don’t know about the differences between Turks and Lebanese, or whether Iranians and Iraqis don’t get along, or whether there is a problem between Bangladeshis and Pakistanis—they don’t care about that. They all see themselves as Australian Muslims and they see a common cause in working together, developing youth programs, developing welfare programs, doing Da’wa [invitation to Islam]. So in the next five to ten years, you’ll see a very big change of attitude amongst the Muslim leadership. It’s developing now, but of course the older generations are still in power, but they need to resign and give up.

Ikebal Patal:

I feel very very encouraged by the younger generations. That’s where the integration will happen, because they are beyond these things; they have already
moved on, you know? … So I think, previously we didn’t have that … and we are now more assertive of our role. You have got very, very articulate young brothers and sisters representing us on TV. We have got journalists, many of whom are on national TV hosting shows, etc.

What is common across these quotes is that young Muslims do not share their parents’ attachment to their origin country. They feel more Australian and demand their rights from society. This is related to the notion of citizenship. Citizenship is not only a legal status, but a ‘mode of belonging’ (Hage 2002, p.3). Hage (2002) studied the Lebanese community in Australia and claimed that first-generation Lebanese perceived themselves as ‘guests’ in Australia. He suggested that the experience of these Lebanese who ‘have not been raised and schooled in Australia’ was very different from the young Lebanese generation (2002, p.4). This resonates with the opinions stated above by the participants in this study. All this has led many Muslims to encourage and support Muslim youth to take leadership roles.

The Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) is well-known for its young board members. Ramzy Elsyed said that at 45 he is the oldest board member. In the ICV, he claimed, they try to identify talented Muslim youth who are active in mosques, universities, organisations or communities and train them for leadership positions. Kuranda Seyit compared Sydney with Melbourne, claiming they are different in terms of age among the leadership. He asserted that Muslim leadership has been substantially transferred to second-generation Muslims in Melbourne, but this has not been the case in Sydney, where first-generation Muslims still hold the main leadership roles.

Tasneem Chopra co-operated with La Trobe University in a Muslim Leadership Program where Muslim youth were trained for leadership positions. The Program aimed ‘to support leaders who can speak clearly and confidently about the various issues which confront people of Islamic faith in Australia today’ (La Trobe University 2011). Chopra suggested that the youth, who were selected from a pool of applicants, are those who ‘identified as young people, who have got the capacity to make a difference by engaging with local state, federal government, stake holders and personalities’. Hass Dellal referred to the National Summit for Muslim Youth:
As part of the strategies of the Muslim Youth Summit, we also developed Muslim leadership programs for young people whom we felt had potential, to groom these young people over a period of time to give them the appropriate confidence, skills and media training to go out and speak to the broader community about Islam and Muslims in public forums, schools—whatever. We now have 45 young people around Australia actively doing this work and we call upon them. We share them across government circles, non-government circles, community, and local government where they act as a voice.

Another example was a leadership program organised by the Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth (FAMSY) called the Believe Achieve Inspire Leadership Program. The program was run in collaboration with Victoria University and aimed to provide a ‘comprehensive leadership development course for the future community leaders’ (Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth 2009). The program was designed to offer ‘multi-streamed and tertiary accredited professional and Islamic based leadership development’ for the ‘leaders of tomorrow’ (Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth 2009). In addition, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship funded the Muslim Youth Leadership Challenge (MYLC) ‘to develop the new generation of Australian leaders’ (Muslimvillage 2007). It also funded the Muslim Youth Summit in which ‘Summit participants identified the need for a unified, cohesive voice within the Muslim Australian community to address negative issues and perceptions’ (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2007, p.17). This demonstrates that the government has sponsored and supported normalisation processes by empowering Muslim youth to come on board.

The participants described Australian Muslim youth as ‘home grown’, ‘Australian’, ‘proud to be Australian’, ‘comfortable in Australia’, ‘demanding’, ‘assertive’, ‘very articulate’, ‘don’t have the baggage of their parents’, ‘know the system’, ‘not intimidated by the system’, ‘do not have an inferiority complex’ among other things. All these are related to the notion of citizenship as a ‘mode of belonging’ (Hage 2002). Australian Muslim youth have a stronger sense of belonging to Australia. They are part of mainstream Australia. They speak normal English and know how to speak in the Australian political and cultural
environment. They raise their voices and demand their rights without being provocative. They are not ‘foreigners’, or at least they are ‘less foreigners’.

Interestingly, the participants did not relate the potential success of Muslim youth to any Islamic or theological reform. As I suggested earlier with regard to local Imams, if people are raised and socialised in Australia, they can more easily reconcile their Islamic and Australian identity. This implies that Islam per se is not impeding the integration process. Muslim leaders view Islam as being malleable and adaptable to Australian culture and society. This is diametrically opposed to the dominant discourses about Islam. There is nothing inherent in Islam, in the participants’ view that inhibits integration. Muslim youth are fully capable of presenting an Islam compatible with Australia and this will normalise the image of Islam and Muslims.

MUSLIM WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP

One of the main sources of criticism against Muslims in the West is the position of women in Islam. Muslim men are perceived as being oppressive to women. The Muslim woman’s veil is seen as an example of this oppression and evidence of Muslims’ backwardness (Gole 1996). In Australia, the wearing of the burqa, as well as polygamy, recently became the subjects of public and media attention (Australian Broadcasting Corporation Television 2012; Herald Sun 2010; SBS 2012). In such a situation, most participants in this study suggested that Muslim women should come to the foreground to defend themselves. They said that this cannot be done by men. The leaders stated that men and women are equal in Islam; nonetheless, this will not be believed if all Muslim leaders are male.

In 2012, the International Atheism Conference was held at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre. A dozen Muslim men, mainly affiliated with the Al-Furqan Institute (an Islamic centre which was raided by the police several months later under the suspicion of a terrorist plot), gathered in front of the conference venue. They had come to protest against atheist beliefs and to call the conference delegates to Islam. They held posters with words such as ‘Message to infidel Ayaan Hirsi Ali [a controversial anti-Islam figure], Burn in hell.
forever!’ and ‘Islam is the only solution’. The Muslim group was then surrounded by a few hundred delegates who chanted, ‘Where are the women?’ (Discern4 2012). The delegates took the absence of women in the Muslim group as evidence of Muslims’ oppressive attitudes towards them. Although gender was not the subject of the confrontation, the single-sex make-up of the Muslim group brought the issue of gender to the fore and obscured the main aim of the confrontation. This shows that the method of delivering a message impacts on how the message is received and understood. Wolfensberger (1980, p.14) argued that if a ‘culturally devalued or alien method’ is adopted, then ‘its image of oddity and devaluation transfers to the person or group served’. This is partly why there have been a growing number of Muslim spokeswomen in Australian public forums in the past few years.

In recent years, an increasing number of Muslim women have made appearances on radio programs and TV shows such as the ABC’s Q&A show. They write in newspapers and are consulted by journalists about a wide range of social, cultural and political subjects. This has been encouraged by Muslim leaders and viewed as an effective way of removing misconceptions about Islam. Even a radical and conservative Islamic political party such as *Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia (HTA)* has encouraged this strategy. Uthman Badar, the spokesperson of *HTA*, suggested that:

> We would encourage sisters to participate as well, again within the boundaries of Islam as such. If a sister participates; if you have an articulate Muslim woman in the media responding to allegations then straight away all those stereotypes about women are broken. And we have some Muslim representatives in the community now, which is a good thing.

Similarly, Kuranda Seyit and Omer Atila pointed out that Muslim spokeswomen can correct misconceptions and provide an alternative image of Muslims to the public:

> Kuranda Seyit:

> We assume that women who wear the hijab are oppressed, or unequal to men, but that’s far from the truth. We need to have articulate Muslim women who are able to
express this, and then eventually it would become the dominant discourse, with people seeing Muslim women wearing the hijab on the news, reporting the news, members of the Parliament wearing hijab, and just articulate women in general wearing the hijab, speaking in public, with people admiring their intelligence and their intellectuality and their courage.

Omer Atila:

What can we do in this regard? I think we have to push Muslim women more to the front, get them to be active in front of western people, so they can see that … Muslim women are activists. They also have the idea that men are pushing women to cover their heads. That’s not true either … if she wishes to do it, if she thinks that it is the command of the Quran, she does it; some of them don’t do it. So it is not really forced, though there may be some cases where that occurs, but you can’t just take that out and use it. So there is a prejudice against Islam.

These ideas have resulted in Muslim women being supported to take part actively in media and political debates. There is now a remarkable presence of Muslim women in the Australian public sphere. Most of them are articulate and educated with a considerable percentage of Australian converts among them. Sherene Hassan and Fatima described the rising number of active Muslim women in Australian Muslim communities:

Sherene Hassan:

So many of the younger Muslim women are excelling in university, have PhDs and Master’s, and they are articulate spokespeople. For example, when I need to call upon representatives from the Muslim faith, I can always think of 10 or 15 Muslim women, but I can’t think of as many Muslim men. So, I don’t know what is happening there, it is like the women are leaving men behind.

Fatima:
It is the Muslim women who are pioneers of these [Muslim] communities. They are actually integrating far better than Muslim men, and I don’t know what it is, maybe we [Muslim women] are a bit more educated, I think. The statistics show that Muslim women undertake tertiary education far more than Muslim men.

Some Muslim organisations have designed programs to empower Muslim women and prepare them for leadership positions. One example is the SILC project (Self-esteem, Identity, Leadership and Community) implemented by the Islamic Women’s Welfare Council of Victoria. One of its objectives was to ‘develop leadership capacity that enhanced the community and strengthened the skills of existing women leadership in the community’ (El Matrah, Bedar & Lotia 2005, p.9). The project aimed to create a network of Muslim women who could be active in ‘organising events, developing radio programmes, public speaking, developing information packages’ (El Matrah, Bedar & Lotia 2005, p.39).

Currently, there are several Muslim women’s organisations in Australia focused on empowering women. They include the Muslim Women's National Network of Australia, the Islamic Women’s Welfare Council of Victoria and the Australian Muslim Women’s association. Maha Abdo, President of the Muslim Women’s Association, has been working to train young Muslim women to take leadership roles at local and national levels. She has organised national women’s conferences and youth leadership camps for young Muslim women.

The presence of some Muslim women in the media, however, should not be taken as evidence of the equal role of Muslim women inside Muslim communities. El Matrah, Bedar, and Lotia (2005, p.15) suggested that ‘despite over-representation in media coverage and general public discourse on Islam and Muslims, women themselves are rarely leaders in the public space in their community and Australia generally’. It seems that the force of negative discourses about the role of women in Islam has convinced segments of Muslims to encourage the participation of women in public debates. However, when it comes to internal power relations, women are disadvantaged. Sara illustrated this point by explaining how Muslim women are encouraged to appear and speak in front of non-Muslims, but not necessarily within their communities. Australian Muslim communities often hold open days at mosques to provide an opportunity for dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims and
to disseminate correct information about Islam to those who would like to learn. Sara stated that when mosques have open days and non-Muslims come to visit the mosques, Muslim women are asked to lead the visitation, but after the program they are pushed back:

It is so common that the mosque asks the women to conduct the mosque visits … because they know that there are certain women who do a really good job and they present really well and all those sort of things. And so you have got the women conducting the mosque visits for these non-Muslims in the main section going, you know, ‘Here is the Mehrab, here is the Menbar, this is what this means …’ and as soon as the mosque open day is finished and the non-Muslims disappear: ‘Women! Get that behind the curtain! And we don’t want to see you, don’t want to hear your voice’. And yet it doesn’t even seem to click in their minds what they are doing. Like, the hypocrisy of it!

This quote illustrates the dramaturgical nature of the efforts and the importance of the public image of Islam for Muslims. The programs are presentations of self that aim to eliminate stereotypes and prejudices towards Islam. The quote also reveals how power relations operate between minorities and the majority. Minorities feel under pressure to craft an image of themselves that conforms to the dominant norms. As Goffman (1959) argued, the presentation of self entails the over-communication of certain aspects of the self and under-communication of other parts. The decision on which parts should be over-communicated, I suggest, is partly connected with the audience’s values and also with power relations between the presenter and the audience. In the majority and minorities’ relationship, it is likely that a minority will highlight the aspects of ‘self’ that are positive in the eyes of the majority. The above example shows how impression management is in play in the context of the majority and minorities. When Muslims return to the back stage and the performance finishes, people behave somewhat differently. While Sara judged this behaviour to be hypocritical, this is an intrinsic part of any ‘presentation of self’ process.

Sara went on further to say that even when some Muslim women go to an Imam and complain about domestic violence, the Imam will ‘tell them to go back to their abusive husbands’. In a similar fashion, Zubeda Raihman, Treasurer of the Muslim Women’s
National Network of Australia, suggested that Muslim women are sidelined on mosque boards:

For example, the *Muslim Women's National Network of Australia* did a survey of about 16 mosques in NSW, and we asked the simple question: “Do you have women represented on the mosque committee?” I see out of them only a handful—just a few said that women were represented on the mosque committee.

This shows that Muslim women still feel significantly disadvantaged within Muslim communities. Muslim leaders generally support Muslim women to act as spokespeople of Muslims. They think that this will help remove misunderstandings about Islam. In their view, Muslim spokeswomen are able to demonstrate that Muslim women are not oppressed and subjugated. They would suggest that the wearing of the hijab has not been forced upon them, and it should be understood as a matter of choice.

The dominant western discourses promote equality of men and women in all spheres of society. The emancipatory women’s movements in recent decades have largely shaped and influenced public discourses. Equality of men and women is always brought up as an integral part of ‘Australian values’ and the ‘Australian way of life’. To be viewed as normal in such a cultural and political environment requires actions by Muslims to show that they conform to this norm. The above evidence shows that Muslim leaders have understood the detrimental effect of a gendered Muslim voice in the Australian public sphere.

**CONCLUSION**

Muslims have been subject to derogatory discourses in the West, particularly in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. Australian Muslims have been severely stigmatised in media and political discourses. For a successful social integration of Muslims, it is essential that these images of Muslims and Islam are changed. Therefore, social integration can be defined as a normalisation process for negatively-valued people like Australian Muslims. Integrationist Muslim leaders have taken on strategies to influence the dominant
Orientalist discourses. With the support of the government, they have initiated structures which facilitate the production of ‘normal’ Muslim voices in the Australian public sphere.

There have been initiatives to normalise Imams’ voices in Australia. This is because most Australian Imams are overseas born and they lack a good command of English. Neither are they well aware of the cultural sensitivities of the Australian cultural and political environment. Their indelicate comments have provoked furious reactions in public on several occasions. The initiation of the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC), media training, and the production of local Imams have been measures for the normalisation of Imams’ voices. Integrationist leaders have also encouraged Muslim youth and Muslim women to take leadership positions. It is assumed that they will be able to produce a more normal voice in the Australian public and eliminate prejudices.
CHAPTER SIX: DISCURSIVE ASPECTS OF THE NORMALISATION PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

Normalisation is a process through which stigmatised people find an accepted and respected status comparable to other groups in society. In the preceding chapter, I described efforts made by integrationist Muslim leaders to develop structures to promote a more consistent, harmonised and integrationist voice. In this chapter, the discursive aspects of the normalisation process are examined. I investigate the discourses put forward by integrationist Muslim leaders for the normalisation of Islam and Muslims’ images and status in the Australian public sphere. I deconstruct the language and discourses of integrationist Muslim leaders and show how they strive to open up a space for Muslims in the dominant narratives of Australian identity.

Integrationist Muslim leaders highlighted the similarities between Australian values and Islamic values. They distinguished between Australian values (e.g. mateship, fair go, justice, and freedom) and certain cultural practices such as drinking, nightclubbing, and gambling. They identified with Australian values, but rejected these cultural practices. Such a distinction, together with a broad and inclusive interpretation of Australian values, enabled them to feel and be Australian. Integrationist Muslim leaders also distinguished between religion and culture. They asserted that during its historical expansion Islam has mixed with many cultures and this is now happening with western cultures. Practices such as forced marriage, they said, should not be taken as Islamic. Rather, they are customs and traditions in some Muslim cultures. The separation of cultural practices from Islam sets the stage for the emergence of an ‘Australian Islam’. I argue that this ‘stripping off’ (Ramadan 2003) process is intrinsically selective and is influenced by the power differentials between Muslims and the Australian majority. The final outcome would be an Islam with an ‘Aussie accent’ (Yusuf 2007).

Integrationist leaders often used social comparison to normalise Muslim-related issues. Festinger (1954) claimed that individuals compare their abilities and opinions with those of others to gain an objective evaluation of themselves. Later on, Tajfel (1981) related social comparison to social identity and contended that it accentuates positive distinctiveness of
the group identity. I argue that social comparison can be used for the purpose of normalisation. I will show how the participants in this study compared Australian Muslims with other ethnic and religious groups to claim that Muslims are ordinary people like other Australians.

These discourses, however, are contested. There are counter-discourses put forward by a minority of Muslim radicals. There is also a disjuncture between Muslim integrationist discourse and the dominant Orientalist discourses. Muslim radicals reinforce the dominant Orientalist discourses. These counter-forces are serious challenges to the normalisation process. I delve into the counter-discourses of Muslim radicals in the next chapter. In what follows, I explain two key discourses of integrationist leaders: 1) Islamic values and Australian values are congruent and 2) there can be an ‘Australian Islam’. Then I provide a detailed discussion about social comparison and its role in the normalisation of Muslims’ status in Australia.

**ISLAMIC VALUES AND AUSTRALIAN VALUES**

In the last decade there have been heated discussions about Australian values and their centrality to Australian identity. The rhetoric of Australian values gained momentum in the 1990s and early 2000s. ‘Australian values’ and the ‘Australian way of life’ have become criteria based on which migrants are judged as being or not being integrated in political and media discourses. At various points Islam has been singled out explicitly as being incompatible with Australian values. On many other occasions, a coded language has implicitly targeted Muslims. Peter Costello (2006), a prominent Liberal politician, once said:

> Before entering a mosque visitors are asked to take off their shoes. This is a sign of respect. If you have a strong objection to walking in your socks don't enter the mosque. Before becoming an Australian you will be asked to subscribe to certain values. If you have strong objections to those values don't come to Australia.
The ‘clash of civilisations’ thesis (Huntington 1993) has been the dominant frame for the explanation of Islam-West relations in the international media over the last decade. In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, 60 American scholars, some of whom were very well known (e.g. Samuel Huntington, Michael Walzer, Theda Skocpol, Robert Putnam, Francis Fukuyama), issued a statement to defend the War on Terror. In their statement, they framed terrorist activities as attacks on American values (Institute for American Values 2002). In Australia, the terrorist acts of some Muslim radicals were also framed by the Australian government (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2004) as attacking Australian values. This has not been limited to terrorism; Islamic values have generally been constructed as incompatible with western values. Prominent Muslim writer and public commentator Randa Abel-Fattah alluded to ‘an unfortunate tendency to construct Muslim and Australian as somehow mutually exclusive’.

In this political climate, integrationist Muslim leaders struggle to oppose the dichotomous constructions that situate western values as incompatible with Islamic values. Most interviewees asserted that they see no remarkable or problematic incongruence between Islamic values and western values. Kamal, an Australian Muslim leader, said that he sees no ‘intrinsic tension’ between Islam and the West. The following quotes show how integrationist leaders compare Islamic values and Australian values:

Kuranda Seyit, founder of the Forum on Australia’s Islamic Relations (FAIR):

We talk a lot about Australian values, about mateship, about friendship, about fair go, about giving our helping hand to someone who is in trouble, about being sociable and hospitable and being friendly to the visitors … these values are all standard and I think everybody loves that—they love sport, they love the outdoors. Every single thing that I just mentioned as Australian values are really fundamental to being a Muslim. The love of helping one another when you are down, those of hospitality, these things are Muslim values—the responsibility of doing good works in the community—so when people say to me, or in the media on talk-back radio, when they say we don’t want these Muslims in our society, I get on the radio and say, ‘Why’?
Randa Abdel-Fattah:

In my view, freedom of religion for Muslims is not just about being able to pray at work, or fast, or have access to halal food. In Islam our obligations go further. We are obliged to strive for social justice, to speak out against tyranny and autocracy, to protect the weak and oppressed, to obey the laws of the land we live in, to protect the environment, to ensure the welfare of animals. All such duties are arguably able to be pursued in a democratic society, and so I believe that a good Muslim will make an ideal Australian, in terms of the virtues of responsible, ethical citizenship.

Berhan Ahmed, African-Australian community leader:

Now when we talk about Muslims and Islam we have to be clear. Islam as a religion is broadly accepting most values that we use in this western society—most of the values. Islam gives freedom in every sense of [the word] freedom.

As shown above, integrationist leaders interpret Australian values broadly so that they can comfortably identify with them. Tasneem Chopra, President of the Islamic Women’s Welfare Council of Victoria, suggested that the concept of Australian values is vague, and no one can name those so-called Australian values. However, she claimed that by looking at the Australian government’s Charter of Human Rights, it becomes clear that there is no ‘competition’ between Islamic values and Australian values. This is because ‘equality, justice and fairness resonate with Islamic values’. Similarly, Nayeera Chowdhury, Director of an internet-based Islamic information service (Light of Islam), viewed no discrepancy between Islamic values and those indicated in the Australian Values Statement, such as freedom of religion; equality of men and women; equal opportunity for all citizens regardless of race, ethnicity and religion; support for democracy, and the rule of law: ‘So in general, if you abide by the law, you are committed to the fundamental Australian values’. She concluded that Australian values do not really clash with Islamic principles because ‘in Islamic principles you have to follow the rule of the land’.

There were other comparisons between Australian values and Islamic values, which came mostly from Australian converts. Monique Toohey, a Muslim community activist, said that
egalitarianism and individualism are much higher in Australia than in Muslim cultures. She said that these values may influence Muslim culture in Australia. Similarly, Bilal Cleland, former Secretary of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, and Rachel Woodlock, a prominent Muslim public commentator, referred to these values:

Bilal Cleland:

Australian national characteristics and Islamic characteristics are the same, but egalitarianism is strong. I think it is probably the Anglo Celtic culture, that we had no nobles, princes or anything else … I think that comes through in Islam here.

Rachel Woodlock:

I think one of the characteristics that Australians like to think they have is to be egalitarian, and I think this is part of a broader, kind of a more egalitarian perception of certain race relations, certainly even gender relations. We live in a much less segregated society than many Muslim cultures, although we have—certainly we have problems with sexism in Australia … for example, equal pay for equal work. Statistically we still only earn about 86 percent of a man’s wage. So there are things for us to work on. But we are a less—certainly less segregated environment and, I think it is reflected in the assumptions of the younger Muslim generations. When you go to the mosque, there is an expectation of a sort of gender segregation, but because socially it is not imposed, I think that allows the young Muslims to try to figure out what is Islamic in terms of their relations with the opposite gender, and what is cultural, and possibly—we would probably end up to be a less segregated environment … Australians culturally tend to question authority and tend to have a little bit of—they don’t necessarily accept hierarchies very well, and across a lot of Muslim cultures, hierarchy in status is very important. It will be quite interesting to see how the next generation will question the types of hierarchies that have tended to exist in traditional Muslim cultures.

In these quotes, ‘egalitarianism’, ‘individualism’, ‘less segregated environments’, and ‘status hierarchy’ were mentioned as differences between Australian values and Muslim
cultures. But they were not essentialised. The participants stated that these values would permeate Islam in Australia, particularly among second-generation Muslims. They considered Islam malleable and adaptable to Australia and saw no intrinsic tensions between the two.

Some participants differentiated between Australian values and Australian popular culture, suggesting that although Islamic values are quite similar to Australian values, there is a disjuncture between Islamic teachings and cultural practices such as drinking, gambling, nightclubbing and the norms around women’s dress. Nayeefa Chowdhury asserted that Australian values should be distinguished from what is practised in mainstream culture: ‘But if you mean things like gambling and pornography, they are not basic Australian values; we have diverse communities here’. Cultural practices such as drinking, gambling and nightclubbing were unanimously rejected by the interviewees. According to Kuranda Seyit, ‘Muslims in terms of their values are against alcohol, or over drinking, or taking drugs and gambling, all of which tend to cause problems in society’. Nonetheless, some cultural practices such as drinking may be perceived as part of being an Australian:

Aziz Cooper:

You know, like being a citizen of Australia would mean that you are law abiding, you want to contribute to the building of Australia, but also, just like other western countries, there are some practices in Australia that are seen to be the norm. If you don’t have drinks with your mates, then sometimes you are seen to be different or un-Australian. There is a lot of social and peer pressure to, you know, go clubbing and what we would say is illegal sex or whatever it is. So some of these […] temptations are to be seen as normal in this environment so then I hope the values of Islam—this is part of our role as Muslims—to contribute good, awesome values to Australia, to help Australia.

This quote reveals an important point. It asserts that broad Australian values may not be the only sources and indicators of Australian identity. The cultural practices that Muslims reject, such as drinking, may be taken as an indicator of being Australian by the majority of Australians. The Australian way of life is sometimes defined narrowly which then excludes
minorities such as Muslims (Mansouri 2010). In opposition to this view, most respondents in this study provided a broad and inclusive definition of Australian identity and values. In so doing, they tried to open up a space for Muslims to be able to identify with Australia. They rejected cultural practices such as drinking as being essential to the Australian identity, but there are also practices among some Muslims (e.g. patriarchy, domestic violence, forced marriages) that do not fit with their broad conception of Australian values. These practices are often highlighted in public debates about Islam. To account for this incongruence, Integrationist leaders distinguished between Islam as a faith and religion, and what is practised by Muslims. They made a distinction between culture and religion, and warned that the two should not be confused.

THE SEPARATION OF CULTURE AND RELIGION

A cursory look at Muslim societies indicates significant variations in how Islam is practiced by Muslims in different countries. One of the classical studies on this subject is Geertz’s (1968) ethnographic study of two Muslim countries: Indonesia and Morocco. He demonstrated how Islam is interpreted vastly differently in these two societies. The historical, cultural and political conditions of these two societies, Geertz illustrated, shaped their understandings of Islam. This is to say that Islam mixed with the cultures it entered to. In the West, Muslims of various cultures live together, and this has generated debates and questions about the essential elements of Islamic teachings. Muslim scholars and intellectuals have endeavoured to distinguish Islam from customs and traditions.

The debate on culture versus religion among Muslims, when entangled with the demands of integration, has raised the question of which Muslim practices are cultural (and therefore changeable), and which are religious. One of the leading intellectuals in this field is Tariq Ramadan, a prominent European Muslim figure. Ramadan made a clear distinction between Muslim cultures and Islam and suggested that this distinction would allow European Muslims to develop an Islamic framework congruent with the realities of life in Europe:
We must distinguish between on the one hand the elements of Muslim identity that are based on religious principles and that give it a necessarily open quality that allows the believer to live in any environment, and on the other hand cultures that are specific ways of living out these principles, adapted for a variety of societies, none having more legitimacy than any other provided that it respects the religious injunction. (Ramadan 2003, p.78)

The process of ‘stripping down’, Ramadan (2003, p.78) argued, allows for the emergence of a brand of Islam specific to the cultural environment of Europe, namely European Islam. This point was echoed by several participants in this study. They felt that the distinction between culture and religion paves the way for the emergence of an ‘Australian Islam’.

Woodlock pointed to a number of Islamic beliefs and practices shared by Muslims around the world. They include the oneness of God, prohibition of alcohol, prayer five times a day, and fasting during Ramadan. Nevertheless, she claimed, there exists ‘a wide range of areas’ where Islam has adapted to local cultures and these ‘cultural expressions’ of Islam are easily identifiable in Muslim countries. She stated further that when Muslims began settling in the western world, they underwent the same process, namely, developing a western ‘flavour’ of Islam. She held that Muslims who have settled in Australia have had to think through the distinction between Islam and their ethnic culture. This necessity arose due to the multicultural fabric of Australian Muslim communities. Muslims of various origins live side by side in Australia, and this made them more aware of their distinct interpretations of Islam. This fact has generated questions about the essential elements of Islam. Woodlock maintained that most Muslim students attend public schools and meet Muslim students from other ethnic groups. They notice differences and bring them home. These challenges, she claimed, have been ‘highly creative’ in developing a ‘unique experience of Islam’ in Australia.

Integrationist leaders emphasised that Islam can adapt to every culture including the Australian culture. Ahmed said that he has a ‘strong belief that Islam survives in any culture and in any situation’. Some participants compared Islam to water, and culture to a container. For instance Nayeefa Chowdhury said:
Islam is like water; you pour water into a container, and it gets the shape of that container.

Maha Abdo said that lack of awareness about the difference between religion and culture is problematic for both Muslims and non-Muslims. She stated that most of her activities have aimed to educate people about this distinction. She raised the example of forced marriages, saying this is practised among some Muslims, but it is not Islamic. However, some people in the wider community attribute this practice to Islam. The association of such practices with Islam undermines the normalisation process, because it essentialises the problems and leaves little room for change. When these practices are linked to Islam, then all Muslims are blamed. Blurring the line between Islam and culture leads to generalisations and essentialisation of the problems.

Maha Abdo claimed that educating Muslims about the distinction highlighted above could be very emancipating. For instance, when Muslim women understand that forced marriage is not Islamic, and that it is just a cultural practice, they can better deal with the issue and become confident with religious guidelines. She warned that the dissemination of information about Islam versus culture can be sensitive, because it may create feelings of incompetency among Muslim migrants. In general, this process of distinction, she asserted, would lead to ‘evolving an Australian identity without fearing that you are going to be leaving something behind’.

Ahmed highlighted the difference between religion and culture by explaining polygamy, which is often taken as evidence of oppressive teachings of Islam. He asserted that Islam did not introduce polygamy into Muslims’ lives, but when Islam entered those lands where polygamy was practised, it was infused with Islam. He claimed that the same thing happened when other religions entered Eritrea: ‘We have got Christians, we have got Jews, and we have got Islam. All of them have monogamy and polygamy. It is not because they are Muslims, No! No! Christians also have these sorts of practices, the Jews have it too’.

Bilal Cleland alluded to the different treatment of men and women in some Muslim communities: ‘It is tribalism; it is not actually Islam. If you look at the prophet—peace be upon him—he was combating the narrow attitudes of men’.
Omer Atila, Executive Advisor at the Australian Intercultural Society, attributed patriarchal practices to the local culture of Muslims. He said that in eastern Turkey ‘men walk two meters in front of women’, but this ‘has nothing to do with Islam’. By the same token, Sherene Hassan, Secretary and board member of the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV), stated that interpretations of Islam tended to be ‘adulterated’ by cultural and patriarchal teachings. She questioned the limited access of Muslim women to mosques and said that although it is practised in some Muslim countries, it is not Islamic. She held that first-generation migrants practise their culture, but they think it is Islam. They have learnt this in their home culture, she said, and do not know that many of these practices are adulterated by their culture and do not conform to ‘pure’ Islamic teachings. In a similar fashion, Tasneem Chopra, Chairperson of the Australian Muslim Women’s Centre for Human Rights, suggested that the confusion of culture and religion has led to Islam being blamed for practices that are not essentially Islamic:

I mean a lot of Muslims’ practices are going to be coloured by culture and when you have that happening, being often, the distortion of Islam becomes great because people look at what is happening in the culture entity and associate that with Islam, and as you know we have 70 different cultures roughly in Victoria alone. So clearly the image and picture of Islam is going to be very very distorted and people think that all Muslims are Arab, or all Muslims are Afghani, or all Muslims are Pakistani. Clearly those cultures impact the way that Islam is viewed …. We know that Taliban and how the bloody of what they do and practice is actually sanctioned because of the culture not because of what Islam says. It is often clothed in the name of religion.

The discourse of religion versus culture prepares the ground for the discourse of ‘Australian Islam’. Sara claimed that an Australian Islam is in the making. She highlighted the role of converts and also second-generation Muslims in the process:

We are at a stage now— while we are still a migrant community, we are now having a lot of second, third, and fourth-generation Muslims and also a lot of converts, so the people whose idea of what it means to be a Muslim have been
formed by an Australian identity … I think this Islam that we are seeing in countries like Australia and the States and England, for example, is starting to have that local western flavour and interpretation … it is reformulating now, I think. It is people who were born here—maybe their parents were born here—who are thinking in an Australian way and approach the faith in an Australian way, with all the good and bad that comes with that.

This quote encapsulates the idea of an Australian Islam. It assumes the malleability, adaptability, and compatibility of Islam with almost every culture. If historically Islam has adapted to so many cultures, it also can adapt to western culture. This discourse contradicts the essentialist Orientalist discourses of Islam. Australian Islam uniquely develops within the cultural and political environment of Australia and incorporates Australian culture in its interpretation of Islam. As well-known Muslim writer Yusuf (2007) put it: ‘Australian Islam needs an Aussie accent’.

To recap, integrationist leaders claimed that Islam should not be equated with what Muslims do. Muslim practices have often been ‘coloured’, ‘adulterated’, and ‘clothed’ with culture. By dissociating Islam from ethnic cultures, the practices which do not seem ‘normal’ in the Australian culture are eliminated and the compatible aspects of Islam are highlighted. This process is essentially selective. It is not carried out in a vacuum, but in a social context where there is a power differential between minorities and the majority. The selective process of removing some aspects of Muslim practices and adopting new ones is influenced by the dominant norms of Australian society. This process leads to the emergence of an Islam that is ‘reformulated’, has an ‘Australian flavour’, and is ‘organic’ to Australia. This by no means implies that integrationist Muslim leaders are succumbing to western culture or acting hypocritically to appease the Australian majority. The point is that those who have been socialised in the Australian cultural environment understand Islam in a way that is congruent with their experience and understanding of life in Australia.
SOCIAL COMPARISON AND THE NORMALISATION PROCESS

Individuals and groups compare themselves with each other to evaluate their status, opinions, welfare and happiness. Festinger (1954) noted that people compare themselves with those who hold similar positions and status. If differences are significant, the likelihood of social comparison decreases. Tajfel (1981) linked social comparison to social identity, arguing that social comparison leads to positive distinctiveness of social identity. Through social comparison, groups highlight their own positive aspects and others’ negatives. I argue that social comparison can have a normalising function. The participants in this study employed social comparison many times. They compared Islamic values and cultures with those of other religious and ethnic groups. The integrationist Muslim leaders used social comparison to claim that Muslims are very similar to other Australians in every aspect. These two functions, positive distinction and normalisation, seem to negate each other, because positive distinctiveness separates Muslims from others, while normalisation denies the distinctiveness of Muslims. However, in this case, these two functions do not contradict each other.

A number of participants compared Islamic values with Australian values and argued for the superiority of the former. But the criteria on which the comparisons and judgments were made were mostly western-friendly. In their comparisons, they did not reject ‘Australian values’, but offered a stronger version of them. For instance, Muslim community activist Monique Toohey suggested that Islamic values are better than Australian values because they are ‘God given’. She said that the ‘Australian version of honesty is not as good as the Islamic version of honesty, because in the Australian version of honesty, there are exceptions to the rule—there are exceptions where deceit is allowed’. She said it can be as simple as telling a lie to children about Father Christmas. In contrast, she claimed, in Islamic teachings honesty is a value that nobody should violate. Toohey contended that Islamic values are ‘purer’ than Australian values. Similarly, Maha Abdo, President of the Australian Muslim Women’s Association, brought up the issue of drinking, and asserted that Australian society is not consistent in dealing with this problem. She held that, on the one hand, there is a lot of advertising promoting safety in driving and less
drinking of alcohol. On the other hand, young people are publicly encouraged to drink. In Abdo’s view, this is a contradiction, and such contradictions do not exist in Islam.

The social comparison went as far as civilisational comparisons. Salih Yucel, a former Imam and current Monash University lecturer, quoted Carl Schmitt, suggesting that western societies have tended to create, or even fabricate, enemies to reinforce their identities. He said that communism had sometimes been constructed as an enemy to the West, and now Islam serves the same purpose. In his view, this is intrinsic to western culture, but Islam is different:

Even Carl Schmitt says if you [the West] don’t have an enemy, fabricate one to have your identity. Otherwise you will lose your identity. But from an Islamic perspective, for the Muslims, this is different, because in terms of identity, what makes us is the religious views, spiritual views … from a Sufi point of view … we have some kind of connection to every human being … we have thousands of connections spiritually. So that is what makes the identity [of Muslims], but in the West it is different.

These examples illustrate how Muslim leaders created ‘positive distinctiveness’ by comparing Islam with Australian values. The common theme was that the criteria utilised for judgments did not necessarily come out of Islam, but were universal values such as freedom, justice, friendship, sympathy, honesty, democracy and equality. In this way, they attempted to respond to the dominant discourses that single out Muslims and portray them as being not compatible with Australia.

Muslims are often criticised for not being willing to or capable of integrating with Australian society. One such criticism is related to the institutions that Muslims build alongside public institutions (e.g. educational, financial, legal and cultural institutions). These institutions are taken by some commentators as evidence of the cultural resistance of Muslims (for instance see Karvelas (2011), Murray (2009), and Bendle (2011)). Mehmet Saral, President of the Affinity Multicultural Foundation, responded to these allegations by comparing Muslims with other groups:
When the Irish came to this country the first time, they built their churches and they built their own schools, because the majority at that time [belonged to the] Anglican Church—the Church of England. So the Irish didn’t fit in and they were the Other. They built their churches and they built their schools. When Italians and Maltese came in, they did not need to build schools and churches because they were Catholic and the Irish had already built the Catholic churches, and in the future, as other Catholics came, they didn’t have to do that because it was already done. When the Greek Orthodox came, they also built their own churches and their own schools because there was not any Greek orthodox church here. When the Egyptian Coptics came, again they were a Christian group. They built their own schools and their own churches, and in a similar fashion when the Vietnamese came, they built the Buddhist temples; the Indians came and they built Indian temples and their own schools in a similar fashion.

The quote demonstrates how integrationist leaders normalise the practice of institution building. Mehmet Saral referred to various Christian denominations that came and built their institutions. Christianity is the dominant religion in Australia and is associated with White Australians. It is the default religion. By making reference to Christianity and highlighting similarities, Saral called into question the intense public focus on Muslims and their practices. If the same thing has happened to White people, why are Muslims criticised and denied the right to do the same? Similarly, Omeima Sukkarieh, Manager of the Auburn Community Development Network in Sydney, questioned the discourse that constructs Muslims as being culturally different and resistant. She said that what is practised among Muslims is commonly practised in other communities, but they do not receive the same attention:

What is the difference? If somebody did the research, a similar kind of research on the Jewish community, you would find that they’ve got their own institutions—their own educational institutions, religious institutions, right? There has never been a question of integration. The same with Hindus, what about the Hindu temples and the Hindu practices? These all happen in other communities, right? So the question
for me is if you did research in other communities and did a comparative analysis, would they be that much different? My guess would be, no!

Omeima Sukkarieh mentioned cultural practices among Muslims, claiming that these are also prevalent among other religious groups. She did not evaluate these practices, nor say whether they were right or wrong. The matter of right or wrong was irrelevant. What mattered was the normality secured if a significant segment of society practises something. Similarly, Kuranda Seyit indicated that patriarchy—often the focus of criticisms against Muslims—is commonplace in other religions and their followers:

There are problems within the Muslim community. There are patriarchal and chauvinistic attitudes amongst Muslim men. That’s right across every religion: Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs. These patriarchal views, or sometimes misogynistic views or chauvinistic views, are prevalent in every society; it has got nothing to do with Islam.

Again we see that Seyit talked about ‘problems’ among Muslims but ‘normalised’ them by saying they exist among other religions. This point is of crucial importance for this thesis’s argument. He, like several other participants, acknowledged that patriarchy is a ‘problem’, but a ‘normal’ problem that needs to be addressed rather than used to de-normalise Muslims. Salih Yucel extended this logic to fundamentalists, saying that some Muslims’ opposition to homosexuality and secularism is shared by Christian fundamentalists, but they don’t get the same amount of media attention as do Muslims. Christian fundamentalism is depicted as a problem, but an ‘Australian’ problem. However, Islamic fundamentalism is a totally ‘foreign’ problem which has been imported into Australia.

Participants also referred to other ethnic groups and to the similar settlement processes that every migrant group has undergone. Australian Muslims have been castigated for creating ghettos, particularly in Sydney. This has been taken as evidence of Muslims’ rejection of integration. Prominent Muslim Artist Nazid Kimmie compared Muslims with other ethnic groups in the process of settlement:
Being an Australian who has observed this for 20 or 30 years, [I’ve seen that] each group or culture that comes to Australia goes through the same cycle, the very same cycle. First and second-generation, they are in ghettos. They are isolated. This is how they find strength, and this is how they preserve their culture. But of course, now we have this—[these] are headlines now—that Muslims, you know, keep to themselves and [stay] in ghettos etc. … I think it happens in every social group that comes to this country. It happened with Greeks and Italians; it happened with Vietnamese … the same we have with the Muslim community.

In a similar way, Tasneem Chopra referred to Greek and Italian communities that settled in Australia around the mid-twentieth century and were subject to racism and discrimination at the time. But over time they have come to be viewed as Australians. She claimed that this will happen to Muslims, and that it is just a matter of time:

I think it is a phenomenon that other communities have shared. We have the Greek and Italian communities. Now we see a Greek MP that I work for. She is a great woman and nobody questions it, or talks about it at all, or nobody says how bizarre and unusual it is, or you know, we should be worried about Greeks. It is considered quite normal. We have MPs with ethnic names … The Muslim community is still having its turn as being ostracised and vilified and demonised and the rest of those negative things, but I do feel optimistic that in time, like in America, that will become hopefully not so much of an unusual thing, but rather an accepted thing.

Hass Dellal, President of the Australian Multicultural Foundation, questioned the intense focus of the public on Muslims:

Applying your example to Italians or the Jewish community or Greek community who have settled in certain parts, why is it that we don’t really harp on that so much? I mean I can show you pockets everywhere today: Frankston is nothing but a British Ghetto of newly-arrived British migrants. If I was to turn around and say that is a British ghetto, what will I be called? Discriminating, or would I be …? You know? So what is the problem here? Is that the difference? Is that the visible
difference?—that we don’t look the same as them, therefore automatically [it’s thought that] we don’t integrate?

These quotes show that the participants did not view Muslims as peculiar or odd. Rather, it is the host society that fears the unknown, and over time, both groups will accept each other. If there are problems in Muslim communities, they are ‘normal’ problems that exist within other Australian groups as well. The important element of these comparisons is that integrationist leaders seem very sensitive to being viewed as uniquely different from the rest of Australia. They attempt to draw similarities with other groups to show that they are normal Australians. Nevertheless, the discourses become somewhat inconsistent when it comes to the place of women in Islam.

**Discourses about the place of women in Islam**

The place of women in Islam has been central in public debates about the compatibility of Islam with western cultures. The Muslim woman’s veil, the hijab and burqa have been depicted in public discourses as evidence of the subjugation of Muslim women. Muslim leaders generally said that men and women are equal in Islam. But their interpretation of equality was dissimilar to western interpretations. Moreover, the opinions of the interviewees differed based on their gender. Male participants were very critical about how western culture treats women and were less critical about the situation within Muslim communities. In contrast, female respondents were very critical about how Muslim women are treated within Muslim communities.

Several male participants openly rejected the western notion of women’s freedom. They defended the idea of equality between men and women, but their interpretation of equality was different from the western understanding. For example, Mehmet Saral referred to equality of men and women in Islam and compared it with western culture, saying of Islam: ‘The man is responsible to take care of the whole family and women are responsible for the household’. He stressed that Islam has not prohibited women from working: ‘Islam gives the perspective that if you want, you can work or you can stay home, but the man has the
sole responsibility to [take care of his] wife and the family’. He then recounted his conversation with an Australian woman:

When I mentioned that to an Australian lady, she said: “I wish my husband would think this way. I would love to stay home and look after the kids”, but he says: “You have to go to the work and you must earn money to pay the rent. I pay half the rent, you pay the other half! I only buy half the food; you pay for half the food!” But in Islam it is not like that!

Similarly, Keysar Trad, President of the Islamic Friendship Association of Australia, criticised ‘western ideology’ for deceiving women and undermining family life. He claimed that in today’s western culture, if a woman has a reliable husband and feels comfortable with him, ‘society tells her in many indirect ways not to be happy with that’. He attributed the high divorce rates and the increase in the number of single-parent families to this western approach. He compared Islamic teachings with western culture and asked: ‘Who respects women more, the one [Islam] that says: No! You have to have a society that will always support you [as a woman]’, or one that says: ‘Go out and earn your money and compete with men and dress in the most attractive manner’? Trad expressed a similar sentiment:

So it is really looking beyond the surface. On the surface you might think: Oh! It looks like women can do more things [in western culture], but scratch the surface and you see that women are genuinely suffering in this so-called free society, and she is a lot more comfortable under the Islamic protections.

Khaled Sukkarieh also compared the place of women in Islam with the western culture:

We view women differently to how other people view a woman in the western world. So a woman can work, if she wants to, but she doesn’t have to—that’s the difference… a man in Islam, doesn’t force a woman to go to work. She is a queen; she sits in this palace and she just gets everything delivered to her. On the other side she can choose to go out and to work but, then, again all the money she makes in her spare time or whatever she wants
to do, that becomes her money. If she wants to spend and share with spending, then she can. So there are a lot of— when we start looking at oppression and ideologies like that, we’ve really got to take a whole view, not just a part of the equation.

This interpretation of equality between men and women was not limited to the integrationist leaders, but was shared by Uthman Badar, spokesperson for *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, a radical Islamic party:

> In Islam, we say men are equal to women, anyway, but does that mean I have to say: “Well, I reject the rules of polygamy, reject the fact that a woman has to cover her head, or reject all the rules in Islam”, which they [westerners] find a problem with.

Uthman Badar did not see any clash between polygamy and equality of men and women. This is an important point to which adequate attention has not been paid. For instance, Rane *et al.* (2011) conducted a survey of 500 Muslims in Brisbane in 2009. They reported Muslims’ opinions on a wide range of issues, including gender equality. In order to investigate the respondents’ opinions on gender equality, they asked Muslims if they thought ‘Islam supports gender equality’ and ‘89 per cent of respondents replied in the affirmative’ (Rane *et al.* 2011, p.135). Based on the examples provided above, such results are misleading, because they have neglected to investigate how the idea of equality could be understood differently.

The above quotes do not follow the pattern described in previous sections of this thesis. I argued that integrationist Muslim leaders try to highlight the similarities between Islam and Australian culture. In so doing, they open up a space for themselves and Muslims to feel and be Australian. Nonetheless, the above quotes by male participants do not fit well with the normalisation process, and can be taken as an exception. It was interesting that the female participants were very critical about the treatment of women within Muslim communities. For instance, a number of participants talked about the limited access of Muslim women to mosques:
Sara, a Muslim public commentator:

If you are walking into our mosques … women have to go around dark ugly back entrances into cramped, dirty, pressed places, where they often can’t hear or see what the Imam is doing … We have a real problem with gender in our community, Oh! My God! I think it is getting better, but there is still a long way to go, and what happens in our mosques is a perfect microcosm of everything that’s wrong with general Muslim community attitudes towards gender, and that really needs to change.

Sherene Hassan:

For example, the whole concept of women not having access to mosques doesn’t seem to be a big problem for them [first-generation Muslims], because culturally, that is what is done in their country, whereas if you look at Islam, this is something that is unacceptable in Islamic teachings. In Islamic teachings women should have access to the mosque.

When they criticised the situation, they emphasised that men’s actions have nothing to do with Islam. They firmly believed that men and women are equal in Islam. If this is not upheld by Muslim men, it is due to their culture, not Islam. It seemed that the interpretation of ‘equality’ by the Muslim women was closer to the western understanding. Moreover, the Muslim women emphasised that the mistreatment of women is not ‘unique’ to Muslim communities, but is widespread in Australia. They cited examples to demonstrate that patriarchy is commonplace in mainstream Australia and Muslims should not be singled out:

Sara:

With the gender stuff, you know, I’d very openly— and have said many times on the public record that we have trouble. We have to say that [the allegations which say] Muslim women don’t have troubles with sexism, it is simply a lie! But I mean, first of all, women always suffered from sexism—welcome to the real world! You know, men rule the world, that’s the way it is. However, the way it is often portrayed in the
media, especially the obsession with the way Muslim women dress, is just moronic and Orientalist and lacking nuance.

Tasneem Chopra:

I would say, yes, an enormous amount of patriarchal interpretations about women’s role exists in every society. And I think, we talk about patriarchy informing Islam, and, I say mainstream as well. We talk about parental leave or parent maternity leave in this country. Who earns more money for doing the same work in this country? We can espouse one view theoretically, but the practice is different whether it’s Islam or whether it is just mainstream Australia. So we need to demonstrate that this inequality of sexes isn’t peculiar to Islam; it is rather a fact of patriarchy. So it happens not because of Islam but in spite of Islam.

Zubeda Raihman, Treasurer of the Muslim Women’s National Network Australia:

In the wider community look at the government is promoting, women in the boardroom, as only 10 per cent of women are in boardrooms, and yeah, they are majority in the population. So that is a concern that women have to take on board not necessarily Islamically [sic], but Islamically, we have double problems. We have our own people [laughs] who are pushing women out, let alone outsiders. There are already problems for the outsiders, for every women, not necessarily Muslims. Women in general are subjugated by every community. Every community you look at women are subjugated. So we can’t say Islam, but Islamic [sic] are more visible.

Rachel Woodlock:

For example, John Howard … talks about the equality between men and women, but at the same time, he had a minister who was talking about— criticising their opposition deputy, Julia Gillard, for not having children, and for, you know, castigating her life choices. So Australia still has a lot of problems with the treatment of women. First of all, get your own house in order before criticising everybody else.
The Muslim women openly criticised the unequal status of Muslim women, but were careful not to assign any peculiarity to Muslim communities. They said that patriarchy is commonplace in Australia. Here we see a recurring theme that Muslim leaders are very sensitive to being perceived as different, odd or unique in Australia. They acknowledged the problems, but normalised them. The Muslim leaders were quite open to discussing any sort of problem as long as Islam, as a faith and religion, is not denounced.

Muslim leaders conceded that many issues exist in Muslim communities and they are keen to address them. However, they are sensitive on two matters: 1) The depiction of Islam as inherently incompatible with Australia and 2) Assigning peculiarity to Australian Muslims. Both of these points de-normalise Muslims. Integrationist Muslim leaders view Islam as being adaptable to any culture including that in Australia. Over time and through the generations, it is likely that an ‘Australian Islam’ will emerge. Moreover, Muslims are not different from other Australians. The criticisms that are often raised against Muslims are commonplace in mainstream Australia. Therefore, Muslims are normal Australians, but have been unfairly stigmatised within media and political discourses. They claimed that the media pays a disproportionate amount of attention to Muslim radicals, thereby de-normalising Muslim identity. They asserted that Muslim radicals are a minority among Muslims and should not be presented in a way that suggests they are the Muslim mainstream.

**Discourses about radical Muslims**

Integrationist leaders view themselves as the representatives of ‘mainstream’ Muslims. They claimed that the majority of Australian Muslims are law-abiding citizens who support democracy, freedom and multiculturalism. They asserted that mainstream Muslims reject terrorism and fundamentalism and have reconciled their Islamic identity with the Australian identity. Muslim radicals, they contended, are a tiny minority among Muslims. Mehmet Saral said that Muslim extremists comprise 0.01 per cent of Australian Muslims. Other integrationist leaders made similar comments:
Randa Abdel-Fattah:

There are those who do oppose democracy and see it as incompatible with Islamic conceptions of government. But they represent a minority.

Fatima:

There are certainly positive models of integration, but integration on our terms, you know, but then there are Muslims who have taken to this issue and responded negatively, and you see that in, for instance these groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir and other very fringe groups. I consider them fringe; I don’t think they are mainstream. I don’t think they resonate with a lot of people, but they have spread off and have created these reactions.

The discursive model of the majority normal versus minority radical is not limited to Muslims, but is prevalent in political and media discourses in various contexts. In the case of political movements, Hall (1993, p. 285) argued that:

The significant fact, for our purposes, is that this minority/majority paradigm in its amplified form has become one of the most persistent ‘inferential structures’ in the signification of political deviance of all types in the political domain and in the media. It has long since become a standard ‘deep structure’ in the definition and labelling of militant political demonstrations, such as the protests against African cricket and the Springboks tour.

The minority/majority paradigm implicitly represents the majority as ‘the reasonable, the rational, the normal, the natural’ (Hall 1993, p.285) while the minority is represented as militant, radical and violent. This frame, Hall (1993, p. 283-4) claimed, has cognitive, evaluative, expressive, explanatory, predictive and consolatory power. He asserted that ‘in almost all cases, the minority/majority paradigm attempts to build a coalition between the moderates and the agencies of control’ (1993, p.284). Australian Muslims are a minority group in Australia. Within this minority group, there is a discourse of mainstream moderate Muslims versus minority extremist Muslims.
This discourse of the minority/mainstream prevailed in the language of integrationist Muslim leaders. They presented Muslim radicals as fringe, marginal and few in numbers. By assigning to themselves a ‘majority’ and ‘mainstream’ status, integrationist leaders attempted to normalise Muslim identity and marginalise/exclude those who do not want to integrate.

It is not surprising that the so-called radicals reject being assigned the status of minority. Uthman Badar, spokesperson of *Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia*, a radical Islamic party, rejected the idea that they represent a minority of Australian Muslims. He differentiated between the ideas and the ‘method of pushing’ the ideas, and claimed that a ‘vast majority of Muslims’ agree with the ideas of *Hizb ut-Tahrir*. He maintained that if many Muslims do not follow *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, it is because of the party’s method, which ‘necessarily means coming into direct struggle with governments’ and requires ‘a level of sacrifice’. By ‘struggle’ and ‘sacrifice’ Uthman Badar referred to the harsh attitude towards them manifested in media and political discourses and to constantly being monitored by intelligence organisations. He said that those Muslim voices who call for secularism are the minority. Similarly, Sheikh Abu Ayman, founder of *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamm’ah Association of Australia (ASWJAA)*, the conservative Salafi group, claimed that his group represents 70 per cent of Australian Muslims and that *ASWJAA* is ‘the most influential Islamic organisation in Australia’ (Schwartz, Duff & Walker 2004).

To recap, terrorism and radicalism are associated with Muslim identity in the dominant Orientalist discourses. Integrationist leaders do not deny that radicalism exists among Muslims. However, they attempt to differentiate a minority of extremists from mainstream, peaceful Muslims. This has enabled them to normalise the status of mainstream Muslims. In contrast, Muslim radicals do not acknowledge that they represent a minority of Muslims. They view integrationist Muslim leaders as being co-opted by the government.
CONCLUSION

Integrationist Muslim leaders promulgate discourses that facilitate the normalisation and social integration of Australian Muslims into wider society. These discourses are by and large incongruous with the dominant Orientalist discourses, which present Islam as inherently incompatible with the West. They underplay the adaptability of Islam to new social and cultural contexts. In contrast, Muslim leaders referred to the history of Islam that demonstrates amalgamation with many cultures. They claimed that Islam, analogous to ‘water’ which takes the shape of the container, has adapted to many cultures. Not only is Islam compatible with Australian culture, but a unique version of Islam could emerge—an Australian Islam. Australian Islam is fully compatible with Australia and conforms to the norms of mainstream Australian society.

The integrationist leaders also rejected the depiction of Muslims as being uniquely different from other Australians. They acknowledged that there are some issues within Muslim communities that need to be addressed. Nonetheless, these issues are ‘normal’ in the sense that they are commonplace in Australia. They drew similarities between Muslims and other ethnic and religious groups to claim that those issues commonly highlighted about Muslims are also widespread in other communities. This enabled them to situate Muslims within, and as part of, mainstream Australia. This is the normalisation process that paves the way for the social integration of Australian Muslims.
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE NORMALISATION PROCESS AND ITS DISCONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapters, I have explained how integrationist Muslim leaders have strived to gain the acceptance, recognition, and respect of broader society. They have adopted various strategies and initiatives to further the normalisation process. This process aims to eliminate Muslims’ negative image in public discourses and leads to Muslims being viewed as part of mainstream Australia. This process, however, is undermined from within Muslim communities and from without. From within, there are extremist individuals and groups with dissimilar agendas, and these are undermining the normalisation process. From without, the media’s disproportionate coverage of Muslim radicals and isolationists impedes the normalisation process. This chapter examines the former, namely, Muslim radicals and isolationists. The role of the media vis-à-vis the normalisation process will be the subject of the following chapter.

With regard to Muslim radicals and isolationists, two separate questions are posed. First, what kinds of discourses are employed that de-normalise Muslim identity? Second, how do these challenge the normalisation process? This chapter explores both questions. In terms of discursive components, the extremists offer alternative interpretations of Islam, Australia, Australian values, social integration, Australian Islam, national identity and multiculturalism which are remarkably different from integrationist narratives. These provocative voices come from various ideological, political and religious backgrounds and should not be considered homogenous. The following discussions will focus on two key groups: *Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia (HTA)* and *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama’ah Association of Australia (ASWJAA)*.

There are common elements in extremist groups’ discourses. They call for the unity of Muslims regardless of where they live. Unlike integrationists, who emphasise the diversity of Australian Muslims, the extremists promote the idea of Muslim uniformity. The idea of *Ummah*, a universal religious community, has existed among Muslims, but has been mostly confined to Muslim elites (Piscatori 2007).
Radical groups such as *HT* try to attribute political meaning to this idea. *HT* rejects the concept of the nation-state and aims to establish a pan-Islamic state in Muslim countries. Similarly, *ASWJAA* underplays the cultural aspects of Muslim lives and highlights the ‘oneness’ of their beliefs. These groups are to a great extent essentialist. They would find the Clash of Civilisation thesis palatable. Not only do they call for the unity of Muslims, but this unity is defined in acute opposition to the West.

The history of colonialism, the recent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq by western governments and the categorical support for Israel by the West have increased anti-West sentiments among Muslims. The anti-West agenda among radicals and isolationists is sometimes political (e.g. *HTA*) and sometimes cultural (e.g. *ASWJAA*). These Muslim groups essentialise the differences between Islam and western culture and discourage the integration of Muslims and non-Muslims. Ultra-conservative groups such as *ASWJAA* promote a worldview that leaves little room for social integration of Muslims with broader society. Social integration requires a level of compromise on both sides, but to *ASWJAA*, Muslims should appease only God, not creatures. These groups undermine the normalisation process by challenging the ‘consistency’ of the message integrationist leaders send to the public.

Moscovici (1985) argued that minorities are able to influence the majority’s views if they are consistent in their words and actions. Contradictory voices and actions damage minorities’ credibility. Muslim radicals put forward separatist ideas which undermine the efforts of integrationist leaders. Radical groups communicate to the public information that is destructive to the image of Muslims. Some radical Muslim groups such as *HTA* are deliberately provocative. However most isolationist groups, such as *ASWJAA*, do not intend to address the Australian public. Their voices are usually confined within Muslim circles and communities. Despite this, they are very often sought out by journalists hoping to elicit sensationalist words or speeches.
HIZB UT-TAHIR AUSTRALIA

_Hizb ut-Tahrir_, the ‘Party of Liberation’ (hereafter _HT_), is an international political party founded by Taqi ud-Din al-Nabhani in Jerusalem in 1952. The main goal of the Party is the establishment of a pan-Islamic state in the Muslim world, called the _Khilafah_. The Party aims to trigger Islamic activism for the establishment of the _Khilafah_ (Mandaville 2007). The _Khilafah_ is a trans-national political system that unites Muslim countries and is run according to Islamic laws (Shari’a). At present, _HT_’s objective is to establish the _Khilafah_ only in Muslim majority countries. Wassim Doureihi, leader of _HTA_, declared that ‘our current struggle is the implementation of Islamic law in the Muslim world that will serve as a model for the rest of humanity (Devine 2006). _HTA_ defined the _Khilafah_ as the following:

The _Khilafah_ is a political system from the ideology of Islam that enshrines: the rule of law, representative government, accountability by the people through an independent judiciary and the principle of representative consultation. It is [a] government built upon a [sic] concept of citizenship regardless of ethnicity, gender or creed and is totally opposed to the oppression of any religious or ethnic grouping. *(Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia 2012b)*

While revolutionary in its objective, _HT_ has adopted a gradualist, non-violent, country-by-country strategy, and has used persuasion and dialogue as its means. _HT_’s six-decade history does not show a record of significant violence; however, it has been asserted that its radical ideology ‘waypoints’ to violence (Mandaville 2007, p.269). Black, a terrorism intelligence analyst, claimed that _HT_ is a ‘conveyor belt towards terrorism, others have called it a precursor organisation towards terrorism’ (cited in Harley 2005). The radical rhetoric of _HT_ has led some people to confuse it with _Al-Qaeda_. Mandaville (2007, p.269) compared _HT_ with _Jihadi_ organisations such as _Al-Qaeda_ and claimed that _HT_ is a ‘non- _Jihadi_ alternative route to world Islamic revolution’. To illustrate this difference, he compared _HT_ and _Al-Qaeda_ with Bolshevik Revolutionary forces: ‘Bringing in a metaphor from the Bolshevik Revolution, we might think of _HT_ as the advocates of “_Khilafah in one country_” in contrast to the more “Trotskyite” _Al-Qaeda, which favors continual worldwide jihad_’ (2007, p.270).
Organisationally, the party has a centralised and hierarchical structure. *HT* has branches in about 40 countries. The leadership location is not disclosed and remains secretive, but is thought to be in either Lebanon, Jordan or Syria (Mandaville 2007). There have been brutal crack-downs on it in several countries, which has contributed to its secretive structure. The party has been very active in the UK, Central Asia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Jordan and Palestine, and has been banned in several other countries including Germany, Saudi Arabia, China and Holland. The collapse of the Soviet Union provided a good opportunity for *HT* to become active in Central Asia (Baxter & Akbarzadeh 2005). The Australian branch of the party (*HTA*) is a provocative fringe group in the Australian political environment. They do not bother to cloak their ideas and ideologies in western-friendly vocabulary and terminology. While there have been calls to ban the party in Australia, they have not been effective (Bergin & Townsend 2007).

In recent years, *HT* Australia has been holding annual conferences titled ‘the Khilafah’. Speakers’ harsh criticisms against western governments, democracy and secularism have captured wide media attention. *HT* is diametrically opposed to the political tenets of current western societies: democracy, liberalism and secularism.

The notion of the *Khilafah* rests on the rejection of the very concept of the nation-state. *HT* views nation-states as being detrimental to Muslim unity. They envisage all Muslims within a single polity. The Ottoman Empire is an example of the type of political system they seeks to establish. They also call for the unity of all Muslims around the entire world, as an *Ummah* (Islamic community worldwide). Their political view and ideology prioritises global agendas over local ones. They ask all Muslims to unite to end the exploitation by western governments of Muslims worldwide.

This view runs counter to the dominant political discourses of patriotism and is specifically against social integration. One of the *HTA*’s speakers asserted unequivocally that ‘we find major issues with values like democracy and over-riding commitment to a nation-state’ (cited in Piggott 2010, p.129). The rejection of an ‘over-riding commitment to a nation-state’ has been used to accuse Muslims of holding dual loyalties. Muslims are castigated for their alleged stronger emotional attachment to the *Ummah* than to their respective nation-
states (Caldwell 2009). This criticism, however, has been rejected by scholars such as Roy (2010), who held that a sense of belonging to *Ummah* does not rule out national loyalty. He claimed that they are on two different levels, comparing it with Catholics’ loyalty to the Vatican, which does not undermine the national loyalty of Catholics. Nonetheless, in a world where patriotism, if not nationalism, is a value, rejection of over-riding commitments to a nation-state places *HT* beyond what is considered normal and legitimate. *HT* has not retreated from its uncompromising rhetoric against western governments, democracy and social integration.

Unlike integrationist leaders, *HTA* rejects the social integration of Muslims with western cultures. Social integration, *HTA* contended, is a ‘forced conversion’ (cited in Piggott 2010, p.129). *HTA* claimed that social integration has been imposed upon Muslim minorities in the West: ‘Through fear and intimidation, the Muslims in Australia, and indeed all of the west, are being coerced to integrate and to assimilate’ (Harley 2005). Uthman Badar, spokesperson of *HTA*, made the following assertion:

> We certainly have a problem with the government’s approach to integration because that is one way despite Islam, it is despite Islamic boundaries, so when they talk about integration, they want us to leave certain key aspects of Islam and integrate fast.

*Wassim* Dourehi, leader of *HTA*, claimed that ‘the push to integration and assimilation is to get us to think and believe and feel in a certain way that Islam will not condone’ (cited in Devine 2006). Badar clarified that *HTA* does not oppose social interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims, but the purpose of such interactions should be the presentation of Islam. He emphasised that they do not espouse separatism but encourage Muslims to interact with wider society: ‘not to make your own communities and mosques insular, but rather to interact as much as possible on the basis of Islam’. Badar eschewed the use of the term ‘integration’ because he believed it creates confusion. Instead, he preferred terms such as ‘engagement’ or ‘interaction’:

> We will not even use the terminology … because that would create confusion. We have proper terminology we can use. For example, in the integration debate we will
not use the word integration; we will reject the idea of integration … We say we encourage interaction on an Islamic basis, right? For example, we would say that the major goal of interaction is presenting Islam, it is not harmony obviously. I emphasise again, we understand harmony to come from somewhere else, not from dialogue or interaction as such, but all interactions help. But for us the main goal of interacting would be to present Islam.

Interaction on the basis of Islam, according to Badar, is to uphold certain Islamic limits such as those around drinking and gender interaction. Furthermore, the purpose of interaction should be the presentation of Islam and not ‘harmony’. The same logic underlies the HTA’s rejection of inter-faith dialogues. Badar referred to interfaith dialogues and said:

Certainly the objectives are genuine,—they want harmony and so and so forth. But this approach contradicts the Islamic approach of Da’wa [Invitation of non-Muslims to Islam], because when you focus on similarities and try to sideline differences, [then] you are not presenting Islam.

Unlike integrationist Muslim leaders who play down the differences between Muslims and non-Muslims, HTA is unreserved in rejecting interfaith dialogue and social integration. It is not surprising that these views are interpreted as separatism, as they run counter to the dominant social and political discourses. HTA goes further and discourages Muslims from participation in the Australian political system because it is secular. They consider secularism incongruent with Islamic principles. This leads to the rejection of political participation in Australia. Badar suggested that: ‘we hold that Islam does not allow, does not encourage direct participation in the secular political framework’. Consequently, HTA discourages Muslims from voting in elections. However, they encourage them to be active politically and peacefully through rallies, demonstrations, campaigns and public speaking. This position is very different from the integrationist leaders’ position that encourages Muslims to influence political processes through nomination in parliamentary elections and through lending support to those political parties more favourable to Muslims. HTA viewed these integrationists as being co-opted by the government. They call them ‘moderate’ leaders and consider them agents of western governments.
HTA denounces western governments’ funding and support of a brand of Islam that is apolitical and has a local orientation. They accuse western governments of nurturing an Islam that does not pose any threat to their interests in the Muslim world and elsewhere. The party asserted that western governments such as the US, Britain and Australia have similar and co-ordinated policies for the control of Muslims. The War on Terror is a platform, in HTA’s view, to control and contain Islam. HTA calls in Muslims to counter these policies by developing a united global agenda. Moderate Muslims, the party asserted, are ‘not to please Allah [God] but to please the [western] rulers and their masters’. The party asserted that the terminology of moderate versus radical Muslims has been planted by western government to ‘distance the Muslims from their deen [religion] and spread their [western] concepts, convictions, and intellectual criteria, so as to ensure their material control’ (Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia 2009).

HTA also repudiated the idea of local Islams such as Australian Islam, British Islam and American Islam. They claimed that these terms have been created by the West to undermine the unity and power of Muslim Ummah. Badar claimed that these terms confer a minority mentality on Muslims living in the West and weaken the sense of oneness among Muslims:

We don’t accept this narrative of minorities. Yes, as a matter of fact, we [Muslims in Australia] are the minority here, but we don’t look at Muslim Ummah, Muslims in Europe, Muslims in America, Muslims here and there as if they are separate entities. Muslims are as one Muslim Ummah, wherever they are. So in that regard, yes, we are a minority here, but we are part of a community that is part of a very powerful Ummah, and that’s from an ideological perspective.

This perspective led HTA to reject Fiqh al Aqaliyyat (Minority Jurisprudence), promulgated by well-known Islamic scholars such as al-Alwani and al-Qaradawi. Minority Jurisprudence sought to relax Islamic jurisprudence for Muslim minorities, particularly those living in the West. It aimed to ease Muslims’ life under non-Islamic rule by developing a separate Islamic legal framework. In 2012, HTA held a seminar to discuss Minority jurisprudence in which Islamic scholar Rian Wiramihardja stated that Minority
Jurisprudence sought to ‘accept the status quo, stifle the unity of Muslims and the Islamic revival’ (*Hizb ut-Tahrir* 2012c). Wiramihardja criticised ‘moderate’ Muslims for being ‘weak and meagre’ and for creating a ‘minority mentality’. He claimed that approaches such as Minority Jurisprudence split the Muslim *Ummah* (*Hizb ut-Tahrir* 2012c).

The emphasis on a ‘powerful *Ummah*’, criticism of moderates for being ‘weak and meagre Muslims’, and rejection of a ‘minority mentality’ are illuminating. These terms partly reveal the nature of the conflict between groups such as *HTA* and the West. Behind the religious terminology (Minority Jurisprudence, moderate Islam, the *Khilafah*, and so on) lies a sense of resistance to power. Groups such as *HTA* view Muslims as being torn apart by what they see as western governments’ ongoing exploitative policies in the Middle East and in other parts of the world. *HTA*’s fight with ‘the West’ is political in nature, not religious; it is rooted in the dynamics of power and resistance. It is important to note that *HTA* is a political party. They clearly identify themselves as a political party whose ideology is Islam (*Hizb ut-Tahrir* 2012b). They do not claim to be a religious organisation in search of spirituality. They are political in the sense that they aim to engage with the real (and worldly) global powers, with the West at the centre. They accuse western states of meddling into the internal affairs of Muslim countries and exploiting their material resources.

*HTA* is provocative and wants to be provocative. Unlike *ASWJAA*, which I will turn to shortly, *HTA* seeks to attract attention by being provocative. They engage with the media. They attend TV and radio interviews and their members actively participate in public panels and interviews. They take every opportunity to be heard in the media. The media section of the party is quite active in issuing press releases, issuing statements and holding press conferences. The Party’s annual *Khilafah* conferences usually capture media attention because of their controversial speakers and inflammatory statements.

These actions undermine the normalisation process led by integrationist leaders. As said in the preceding chapters, consistency is a key tool for minority influence. Groups such as *HTA* damage the consistency of the message sent to the public by integrationists. They give
out ‘destructive information’ (Goffman 1959) which disrupts the efforts of integrationist leaders.

The provocative nature of HTA has predictably drawn many criticisms from other Australian Muslim leaders. Amjad Mehboob, former president of AFIC, described the cause of HT—the revival of the Khilafah and the establishment of the Shari’a law—as ‘totally irrelevant in this country’ (cited in Harley 2005). Similarly, Keysar Trad felt that the creation of the Khilafah is a ‘dream’ and impractical:

That group [HT] has been around since [the] ‘50s. What has happened? 60 years—what has happened? Nothing! They don’t have a history of being involved in violence—nothing happened. You know, some groups—I know them, I respect them, they’re sincere—well in a sense, it is like trying to pursue this dream without putting any constructive steps towards it.

Well-known Muslim writer and commentator Irfan Yusef described HTA’s Islamic ideology as being unsophisticated. In relation to the popularity of HT among Muslim university students, Yusef claimed that ‘HT is a temporary pit-stop on their [students] way to more refined and sophisticated Islamic thinking’ (cited in Piggott 2010, p.130). HTA is a political party with clear strategies to engage with public discourses. They have chosen to use provocative language and know its consequences. Nonetheless, there are other Muslim groups whose controversial comments have been reported in the media, though they had not planned it. They are largely social groups rather than political groups, but they also undermine the normalisation process. Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama’ah Association of Australia (ASWJAA) is a prime example.

**AHLUS SUNNAH WAL JAMA’AH ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (ASWJAA)**

*Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama’ah Association of Australia* (hereafter ASWJAA) was established by Sheikh Mohammad Omran (also known as Sheikh Abu Ayman) in 1985. ASWJAA is a
Salafi group. As described earlier, Salafism is a segment of Sunni Islam with an ultra-conservative worldview. Their literal interpretation of the Quran and Islamic texts has led them to be labelled fundamentalist. They are close to Wahhabism, the dominant religious establishment in Saudi Arabia (Mandaville 2007).

In Australia, ASWJAA is the best-known strand of Salafism. In comparison with HTA, ASWJAA is less political and more religious. Salafi leaders are Imams and religious scholars. They are also more conservative than HT when it comes to issues such as gender roles. HT’s political nature has made it more pragmatic than ASWJAA. Badar recounted a meeting of HT leaders with Imam Khomeini, the supreme leader of Iran, right after the 1979 Islamic revolution, during which HT leaders asked him to attenuate Shi’ism in the structure of the new emerging state so that Sunnis could identify with it and take it as a model for the establishment of the Khilafah. This pragmatic stance is almost unthinkable with Salafis, who show great hostility towards Shi’ites and Sufis and view the differences from a religious perspective. Salafis are also hostile towards other religions such as Christianity and Judaism (Roy 2011b).

ASWJAA is an association of several organisations and centres throughout Australia, particularly Melbourne. Twenty affiliated organisations are listed on the ASWJAA’s website. These organisations and groups mostly concentrate on religious education and religious ceremonies, with a particular focus on Muslim youth. For example, Hume Islamic Youth Centre (HIYC) in the north of Melbourne—an area with a high concentration of Muslims—is active in hosting Islamic classes as well as recreational activities such as sporting events.

In Australia, Salafi leaders and groups are diverse and cover the political spectrum. There are groups and people who have very ‘moderate’ positions towards Australian society. For instance, the Islamic Information and Services Network of Australia (IISNA) is an important Salafi group in Coburg, Melbourne, which was founded by Shikh Abu Hamza. Abu Hamza was initially part of the Islamic Information and Support Centre of Australia (IISCA), the main ASWJAA group in Melbourne, but left because of internal conflicts. He then established IISNA, which is known to be a ‘moderate’ Salafi group. Abu Hamza
praised Australia for its generosity towards refugees as well as for its multiculturalism in allowing Muslims to practise their religion freely. In his lecture ‘How to live in Australia as a Muslim’ he told his story of coming to Australia as a refugee in 1976:

I remember when I first came here, we lived on a farm for a short period of time until we settled down in a house in Campbellfield. When we were there, the first thing we were provided with was furniture, and we were provided with financial assistance, and this is a fact. And many of those migrants when they first came here, they were provided with medical assistance, finance, and this is a fact. And [the prophet] Muhammad has said: *Man Lam Yashkor-el-Makhlough, Lam Yashkor-el-Khalegh* [an Islamic Hadith which means:] whoever is not grateful to people, he is not grateful to the creator (Abu Hamza 2008).

Abu Hamza encouraged Muslim youth to ask their parents about the hardships of living in their original countries, suggesting that this might make them grateful for the opportunities they have in Australia. He wanted Muslim youth to take on an Australian identity and be proud of it:

I don’t like it when I see some of the brothers come here, and they have got on their T-shirts “I love Lebanon”, to be honest with you, even though I am Lebanese … you are a Muslim Australian and be proud! (Abu Hamza 2008)

Abu Hamza came to public attention when he attended the trial of Abdul Nacer Benbrika, who had been charged with instigating a terrorist plot in Australia and was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment in 2009. Abu Hamza was reported to have had discussions with Benbrika asking him to stop ‘teaching boys to do something … violent in this country’. When Benbrika asked him: ‘Are you a spy?’ Abu Hamza replied, ‘If you intend to do anything silly, I will become a spy’ (Kissane 2008). Nonetheless, Abu Hamza’s conservative views have at some points created public outrage. For instance, he once said that men should be permitted to beat their wives. His words were published by the media and received a furious reaction from the public to the extent that Kevin Rudd, then Prime Minister, asked him to ‘repudiate them and apologise’. Abu Hamza later noted that his words were taken out of context (Hughes 2009).
Another example is Sheikh Abu Ayman, founder of ASWJAA, who currently runs Hume Islamic Youth Centre in the north of Melbourne. His has probably been the most controversial Muslim voice in Australia. He called Osama Bin Laden a good man, denied the role of Muslims in the London Bombings, was reported to have had connections with overseas radical organisations, and was said to have received financial support from Saudi Arabia (Birnbauer 2006; Piggott 2010). He was accused of radicalising Australian Muslim youth. Muslim Leader Kara Ali, appointed as a member of the Muslim Reference Group by the Howard government, accused Abu Ayman of having a ‘hidden agenda’ and asserted that ‘Omran's [Abu Ayman] conspiratorial pussyfooting over the issue of terrorism is producing more Bin Ladens in the suburbs, and it's turning more of Australia's youth towards the path of destruction and terror’ (Kerbaj 2006).

I interviewed Abu Ayman in HIYC in the north of Melbourne. Although he was clearly conservative in his worldview, I did not find his views towards Australia as negative as had been reported in the media. I asked him about Australian Muslims and whether he thought they could live in a western culture while remaining true to their faith:

Abu Ayman:

Islam is very compatible, somehow, with Australia. If you are talking about the system, the system is different. Talking about people—altogether a different story. So as systems, of course, two systems can’t work together—either this system works or that system works.

Hadi: What do you mean by ‘system’?

Sheikh: Islam as a system, democracy as a system, doesn’t matter in Australia or anywhere else. Any system in the world likes to be supreme by itself, if it is democracy or capitalism or socialism or Islam, whatever it is. So everyone, every ship has one captain, let’s say in simple words. That has not anything to do with religion itself. As a religion, Islam, like any other religion in Australia, as long as the people understand what are their limits and are not oppressed by the other side, everything is happy with everyone. But this is where the problem is, if you don’t understand what I need, or you do not want to understand what I need, then we have
the problem… Since Australia [was] established until today, there have been ups and downs on these matters. They changed a lot of things in their system, … policies of immigration, this and that. They reached the conclusion that the old policies cannot work; this is why they chose the policy that gives everyone his own freedom to choose his religion, to choose his practice, open your mosque, open your church, open whatever, and as long as you are working within the limits of the society, you are most welcome and we are welcoming that too. And we are supporting that and we are helping that to stay as much as we can.

This quote indicates a clear recognition of and comfort with Australian multiculturalism. It counters the view that Salafi conservatives such as him seek to take over Australia. I asked him if he likes, and would try to establish, the Shari’a law in Australia. He took a realistic approach, saying: ‘That is not something in my hand to like or not. I want my religion to be supreme here, and there is no doubt about that; otherwise I will not be a true believer. Something you wish for is different from something in reality’. However, his ‘wish’ to see Australia being ruled under Islamic law did not keep him from accepting the current situation:

What I want in Australia, I want to teach my kids and every Muslim. And any kids [who] want to learn, [they are] most welcome… That is what I need, and I want everyone to support me, to support that. At the same time I am supporting Australia by that, because we are giving our kids to Australia, we give our money to Australia, we give our youth, I myself give my youth to Australia. I have been in this country more than I have been in my birth country… And thanks God again that we don’t have this issue in Australia at all [asking us] either you choose to be an Australian or to be a Muslim. That never happened and I hope will never happen.

Here there is evidence of his open and positive view of the state of affairs in Australia. He lives comfortably within the system as long as he can practise his religion freely. He expressed his attachment to Australia and exhibited no issue with being both Australian and Muslim. Multiculturalism, for him, is a haven in which he can retain his faith and live according to his belief system. There is, nonetheless, no effort made to communicate with
the rest of society. This approach is not pro-integration, but isolationist. It leads to what Hartmann and Gerteis (2005) called ‘fragmented pluralism’. In this model, groups keep strong solidarity among themselves, but do not try to make connections with other groups. This is the model of multiculturalism that has been criticised for undermining social cohesion (e.g. Usher 2011).

Abu Ayman also openly decried terrorism and extremism, saying that Islam rejects extremism. I asked him about his controversial comment about Bin Laden—calling him a good man. He recounted the conversation in the TV show when he made the comment:

[The host asked] Are you saying Bin Laden is a good man? I said, well, I said that, and I am still saying that, but why [did I say] that? Did I say that because he went and destroyed the September 11 things, the towers as they call [them]? I told you from the beginning I don’t believe this was a Muslim action in the first place. I believe [he is] a good man because he put so much of himself to his people, not because he carried a gun—I never saw him carrying [a gun]. I don’t know him …, but I know a rich person who was born with a golden [spoon] in his mouth, with billions of dollars in his hands, and he sacrificed all of that to his people. That, in any term, is called a good man … even you [the West] used to call him a good man. I say who supported him in Afghanistan? Wasn’t it Americans and the Australians and the British? Or today he is a good man and tomorrow he is not a good man? I can’t change my attitude towards people because you changed your attitude; we are not politicians like you—today it is white, and tomorrow it is black. When we see it white, it is still white. [When] they change the colour then, we change [our attitudes], but the man [Bin Ladin] never changed. He was like that [from when] you liked him until [when] you hated him—he never changed. Yes he has some issues I disagree with and that is normal; I disagree with so many people on some issues, but that’s different to call me a radical for that. That is a stupid thing!

This quote shows that Abu Ayman openly condemned terrorism and extremism. He did not see any Islamic basis for the September 11 attacks. He positioned himself outside politics and talked from the perspective of a religious scholar whose opinions are not swayed by
political waves. Nonetheless, the attacks were not enough to change Abu Ayman’s view towards Bin Laden, and this is what makes him a controversial figure. Such indelicate comments in the age of the War on Terror are enough to cause sensational stories in the media. The Salafi’s ultra-conservative worldview, with their strong anti-West themes make such allegations credible to the mainstream public.

Another example is provided by Sheikh Feiz Mohammad, a prominent member of ASWJAA and an Imam in Sydney, who was described by the media as a ‘firebrand cleric’ (The Daily Telegraph 2012). His comments have been very controversial during the last few years. He advised Muslims: ‘Don’t take them [non-Muslims] as your intimate friends and advisors’ because they ‘will spare no efforts to corrupt you’. He referred to Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and the exploitative US foreign policies vis-à-vis Muslims, and claimed that the War on Terror was nothing more than a war against Islam and Muslims that aimed ‘to ensure the Zionist—the pig—the Zionist American domination in every corner of this earth’ (Feiz n.d.). In 2012, Channel 7 reported him as saying that rugby is the ‘devil’s game’ and ‘anyone who watches it is so much succumbed to it. They are almost hypnotised and seduced by rugby league’. The Channel 7 News reporter debunked his words, saying that ‘for many Australians rugby league is like a religion’ (Duffy 2012). Sheikh Feiz Mohammad issued a response saying that his words were ‘taken out of the context’ and it was a ‘cut and paste’. He clarified his points:

I, as a devout Muslim, am obliged and have a duty to remind those who play or participate in the current game [rugby]—Muslims and non-Muslims alike—that many of the promotions, advertising and external [gender] interactions that take place throughout the game, are against the teachings of Islam and Christianity. Both gambling and alcohol advertising/consumption are features of the current game which are harmful to families, children and those around them. They are features which are readily available and accessible at every game, not to mention seductive in their appearance and approach. (Feiz 2012)

It is very interesting that his language was substantially changed in response to the media. The first comments (the devil’s game) was not intended to be addressed to the public and
the language was inappropriate. The second response, a letter to the media, was more tactfully worded. There is a reference to ‘Islam and Christianity’. The denouncement of the game was based on family values, the protection of children, and the harms of gambling and alcohol. This response was tailored to both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences; therefore the criticisms were toned down.

*Salafi* leaders prefer to address Muslims and often shy away from talking to the public. They are largely confined within Muslim communities and do not often address non-Muslims directly. They may use insensitive language, sometimes reported by journalists, causing a reaction. This is evident in the above example, and was also the case in the earlier example of Abu Hamza’s comments on wife beating.

*Salafi* leaders also promote the idea of the oneness of Muslims and encourage them to enhance internal rather than external social bonds. Abu Ayman criticised integrationist Muslims leaders who emphasised the diversity of Australian Muslim communities. In his lecture, ‘Multiculturalism in Islam’, he differentiated between culture, on one hand, and habits/customs/folklore on the other hand: ‘Culture comes deeply from the root of your belief’ so ‘we [Muslims] don’t have so many cultures’ (Sheikh Abu Ayman 2006). Basically he equated culture with religion and took faith as the essence of culture. In this way, he trivialised cultural differences between Muslims for the purpose of a stronger community faith. Moreover, groups such as *ASWJAA* consider themselves to be the truest Muslims, representing the majority of Muslims. Abu Ayman claimed that his group represents 70 per cent of Australian Muslims and *ASWJAA* is ‘the most influential Islamic organisation in Australia’ (Schwartz, Duff & Walker 2004). They reject the suggestion that they are a minority within Muslim communities.

In summary, *Salafi* groups, and in particular *ASWJAA*, undermine the normalisation process led by integrationist Muslim leaders. The *Salafis’* conservative worldview and their inflammatory speeches about western cultural practices—and particularly about women—have often elicited furious reactions in wider society. The association of *Salafism* with violence and terrorism has caused their image to deteriorate. The alleged financial support of *Salafis* by Saudi Arabia (Ain al-Yaqeen 2002; Piggott 2010) has added fuel to this
distrust. Unlike *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, *ASWJAA* does not approach the media, and their controversial comments have usually been extracted by journalists. Unlike *HTA*, which deliberately engages with mass media and shows competence in dealing with public discussions, *Salafi* groups have shown little interest in engaging with the media and wider society. They do not seem to be capable of handling public debates well, as is evident in the examples provided above.

**CONCLUSION**

There are isolationist and radical Muslim voices among Australian Muslims that undermine the normalisation process. They highlight the unity of Muslims around the world (the *Ummah*) and emphasise the differences between Muslims and non-Muslims. They see large differences between Muslims and non-Muslims, and are very critical about the political role played by western states in the Muslim world. These groups undermine the efforts of integrationist leaders by disrupting their presentations of Islam. They damage the consistency of the message integrationist leaders send to the Australian public. Any successful impression management, as Goffman (1959) argued, needs a level of information control. Integrationist leaders, however, lack the power to exert control over all Muslim voices. In this process, the media play a crucial role. Sections of the media give coverage to radical voices, and in so doing de-normalise Muslim identity. In the ensuing chapter, I delve into the role of the media *vis-à-vis* social integration and normalisation.
CHAPTER EIGHT: THE MEDIA AND THE NORMALISATION PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the role of the media in the normalisation process of Australian Muslims. The dissatisfaction of Australian Muslims with the media has been noted in several studies on Australian Muslim communities (see for example Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia 2010; IDA 2007). In the interviews conducted for this study, Muslim leaders unanimously expressed their concern about the media’s negative portrayal of Islam and Muslims. In the modern world, experiences of reality are now to a large extent mediated. Ordinary people have limited first-hand experience and insights into complex social and political problems. The knowledge people gain about reality is not an informed and theoretical knowledge, but ‘the sum total of “what everybody knows” about a social world, an assemblage of maxims, morals, proverbial nuggets of wisdom, values and beliefs, myths, and so forth’ (Berger and Luckman 1966: 83). This uninformed knowledge can be manipulated by those who have the expertise, money and power to frame news and events. In the context of migrants this becomes very important because migrants often lack access to the mass media and cannot make themselves heard in public. This chapter shows how Muslim leaders evaluate media discourses and also explains various strategies adopted by them to influence media discourses.

THE MEDIA AND ITS PORTRAYAL OF AUSTRALIAN MUSLIMS

The respondents assigned a key role to the media in shaping public attitudes towards Muslims. They said that Australians develop opinions about Islam based largely on what they are exposed to in the media. In their view, most Australians do not know any Muslims in person and know very little about Islam and Muslims; their knowledge comes mostly from the mass media. The mass media, however, have always shown snapshots of conflicts, violence and terrorism in relation to Muslims. Therefore it is not surprising that public attitudes are negative. The following comments show how the participants view the media:

Mehmet Saral, President of the Affinity Multicultural Foundation:
Many Australians, the only thing they read in their lives is newspapers; many many people are like that, and many Australians are like that—the only thing they read are newspapers; all their education comes from newspapers. When newspapers print something that represents only 0.01 per cent of the Australian Muslim population [Muslim extremists], all Muslim population is thought about in this way. It is human nature.

Nur Shekmbi, Art Officer at the Islamic Council of Victoria:

Much of the hysteria surrounding integration…..or the supposed lack thereof, is not the reality for most [Australians] in their day-to-day life. The main obstacle in place seems to be the hype in the media.

Sara, prominent Muslim public commentator:

I think it is a concern in wider Australia, maybe not in all Australia, but certainly I think there is that [anti-Muslim] sentiment, and I don’t think it is helped by a certain force of the media like, you know, Today Tonight, and the Herald Sun, and A Current Affair, and those sorts of programs.

Sherene Hassan, Secretary and Board member of Islamic Council of Victoria:

I spoke to a group of students in the Mornington Peninsula area. I was speaking to an audience of 200 people and I asked how many of them have a Muslim friend. No one put their hand up. It was 200 people in one room and the only source of their knowledge about Islam is what they see on the media, and the worst examples of Muslims are those that make it to the media. So it is a real problem that we are being judged by our worst examples.

Nazid Kimmie, prominent Muslim artist:

It has been used by the media and certain parts of the political spectrum … to show us we [Muslims] are different.

Khaled Sukkarieh, Chairman of Islamic Council of New South Wales:
People don’t understand what Muslims are, but because of what they see on TV or what they hear in the media, because of what they read in the newspapers, they will say: ‘Wow!’ they are a problem! And that is how they possibly make form their views. Once that picture is created, it is hard to change it because they would consider it as a scary.

Tasneem Chopra, President of the Islamic Women’s Welfare Council of Victoria:

I think the face of Islam has changed obviously across the globe and that has an impact at the local level because people’s understanding and mainstream [perceptions] are born of the media, and clearly in the last 10 years, the perception has been very negative.

The media images to which these leaders refer largely relate to issues overseas. This demonstrates how international Muslim-related conflicts are thought to shape Australians’ views of Australian Muslims. This ties in with the homogenising discourses (Hopkins 2008) that underpin media discourses on Muslims. In these discourses, Islam is depicted as a set of eternal and unchanging beliefs and practices shared by all Muslims around the world. Muslims’ behaviours are explained by exploring Islamic teachings. Consequently, the political and economic factors are underplayed. These Orientalist discourses highlight the cultural differences of Muslims with non-Muslims, as noted above. Although the above quotes resemble the out-dated ‘magic bullet’ theory of media effects, which considers the media as powerful enough to mould audiences’ views (Baran and Davis 2012), several studies have affirmed that most Australians do receive their information about Muslims from the media (Rane & Abdulla 2008; Mansouri 2010). This is particularly important in a context where Muslim issues have been extremely politicised and securitised. Hall (1993, p.277) argued that in tense and problematic situations media power increases:

The mass media… have an integrative, clarifying and legitimating power to shape and define political reality, especially in those situations which are unfamiliar, problematic, or threatening: where no “traditional wisdom”, no firm networks of personal influence, no cohesive culture, no precedents for relevant action or
response, and no first-hand way of testing or validating the propositions are at our disposal with which to confront or modify their innovatory power.

Similarly, van Dijks (1996, 2000) claimed that Whites have little first-hand interaction with minorities and have little access to the public media. This imbalance has led to biased media reporting against Australian Muslims.

The respondents did not often differentiate between various media outlets and their representations of Islam. Their language was not nuanced in using the term ‘the media’. They lumped together diverse media and assigned a negative role to them. However, the Australian media are diverse in their representation of minorities. For instance, Fairfax and News Ltd, the major media enterprises in Australia, are dissimilar in the ways in which they approach and frame ethnic issues. The Fairfax Company, which owns Melbourne’s *The Age*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and *The Australian Financial Review*, sits in the political centre and leans towards pro-multiculturalist positions. In contrast, the right-wing News Ltd Company, which owns *The Australian*, the *Adelaide Advertiser*, the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, the Melbourne *Herald Sun*, Hobart’s *Mercury* and the Brisbane *Courier Mail*, is less accepting of cultural diversity (Jakubowicz 2007). The same is true of TV channels. The state-owned ABC channel is different from the commercial Seven and Ten networks.

This nuance, however, was not reflected in Muslim leaders’ words. By the term ‘media’ they mostly referred to tabloid and commercial media, and popular TV news shows such as *Today Tonight* or *A Current Affair*, looking upon them as influential in forming the public perception towards Muslims. They claimed that the media do not often highlight the diversity of Muslim communities, but rather treat them as a single entity. Hass Dellal, President of the Australian Multicultural Foundation, was critical of the ‘wholesale branding of Islam’ in the media:

> There is irresponsible media reporting, you know—all sorts of not so factual [material]. There has been a wholesale branding of Islam as a violent and terrorist religion. That is a major challenge we have got now, this wholesale branding.
Similarly, Randa Abel-Fattah decried the media’s inattention to the diversity of Australian Muslims:

When we speak about Islam in the West it is a constructed understanding and image that starts from a presumption that Islam is oppressive, woman-hating, violent and hateful. Such discourse makes sweeping generalisations about Muslims and treats them as a homogenous mass—no sophistication or nuance. We all think and act the same way. The nominal Muslim is lumped in with the religiously observant. The religiously observant is lumped in with the radical. The moderate is lumped in with the extremist. And so Australian ‘values’—which are undefined and change according to which politicians is talking—are pitted against the most extreme versions of Islam—the terrorist, misogynist deviations from the peaceful, equitable principles and teachings of the faith.

The media discount the diversity of Muslim communities, lump all groups of Muslims together, and associate them with terrorism and violence. This discourse is simplistic, reductionist and misleading. The respondents said that the media do not balance their portrayals with the more positive, normal aspects of Muslim communities. This point is important to the process of normalisation. Over the course of the interviews, I noticed that the participants easily acknowledged that there are serious problems in Muslim communities. They agreed that there are problems such as radicalisation, domestic violence and isolationist attitudes. These are the same criticisms made by the media, so why were they criticising the media for things that they agree with? I asked Sara this question, and she replied by referring to a recent program on a commercial TV program about a convert Muslim who said the Sharia law (Islamic law) should be established all over Australia:

*Sara:*

If you take the show *Today Tonight*, for example, they go—I know that they go searching. For example, they decided on another story on Sharia Taking Over Australia. They go and search for people like the guy who runs Sharia for Australia [website], who is such a nobody in our community; like, when I first [watched the
show I asked:] who is this guy? Never heard of him, no one had heard of him. So shows like that are actively going looking for the lone widow, and then suggesting that this is in fact the norm, and that is the problem with media representations, that [they] will go hunting for things that— yeah, I would never deny that [these Muslims exist]—we see them on TV—but the problem is that it is portrayed in a way that suggested it was somehow representative as opposed to being an aberration.

Ramzy Elseyed discussed the same program:

That 60 Minutes program, that’s just one individual— is exactly one extreme individual. In every community you have extremists, you have people who are hardliner, you have people who don’t represent, you know, what the wider community thinks …and it is natural that they [the media] want to highlight, polarise and put the spotlight on these individuals. We find it incredible. Some Muslim people actually get to the point, within the Muslims, where they still think these people who are on 60 Minutes, like the man who was— [he] must have been planted by those who have these anti-Islam agendas. They must be! Because where did they get that person from? … Where was his congregation? Did they show which mosque? It doesn’t, because he is so marginal.

These quotes reveal the issue Muslim leaders have with media representations. They do not deny that there are minority radicals among Muslims. What they complain about is that the media depicts the ‘aberration’ as the ‘norm’. The aim of the normalisation process is to reverse this. It seeks to establish the fact that Muslims are by and large part of mainstream Australia and the actions of a minority should not undermine their status in society. This was a recurring theme raised by the majority of participants, as demonstrated by the following comments:

Omeima Sukkarieh, Manager of the Auburn Community Development Network:

Let’s be devil’s advocate here, ok? I am thinking about it as a non-Muslim person, who has for many years read the newspaper, and yeah, sure the people that blew up the twin towers just happened to be of Muslim faith … but [as a non-Muslim] I am
not going to know that; somebody who knows very little about Islam, I am not going to know that, I am not going to differentiate between a Muslim and what Islam is.

Saral:

The obstacles are, I suppose, that there are minority Muslim groups in Australia, very very small groups who have radical thinking, and these minority groups tend to take up a lot of media space, and when the general Australian population reads the newspaper, he or she sees a negative image of Islam and straight away says all Muslims must be like this.

The Muslim leaders believed that this type of coverage shapes Australians’ attitudes and sends the message that Muslim radicals have infiltrated all aspects of Australian society. They deplored the media because they do not often balance this with a picture of peaceful, mainstream Muslims. Khaled Sukkarieh referred to the high level of success Muslim students have had in being accepted into Australian universities:

If these people [Muslim students] are going to get a better education, what are they doing with it? Are they actually going back to the place their parents came from and contributing to that society, or are they actually using those skills in Australia? That’s what the debate should be about; it shouldn’t be about, Oh! These scary people that are wearing … funny turbans or funny headgear or … It shouldn’t be about that, it should be about how we Muslims contribute to society … look at our contributions!

These types of media coverage referred to above undermine the normalisation process. The disproportionate focus on Muslim radicals validates Orientalist discourses which place Islam in opposition to the West.

The sensationalisation of Muslim news was evident in the reporting of the Sydney protest in September 2012. The protest, described earlier, received wide media coverage. The event was quickly translated and framed in relation to issues such as multiculturalism, Jihad, freedom of speech and Australian values. For instance, the NSW Premier, Barry O'Farrell,
commented on the protests, saying it was an ‘unacceptable face of multiculturalism’ (Vasek 2012). Although the pictures of the protest displayed a young constituency, most likely of second-generation Muslims, the opposition leader, Tony Abbott, asserted that ‘newcomers who come to this country are not expected to surrender their heritage, but they are expected to surrender their hatred. I think that’s the message that needs to go from every Australian to those people on the streets of Sydney yesterday’ (Australian Broadcasting Corporation News 2012, emphasis added). The mention of ‘newcomers’ and juxtaposition of ‘Australians’ with ‘those on the streets of Sydney’ positions Muslims as foreigners and un-Australian, even if they were born or grew up in Australia.

Interestingly, during the same weekend as the Sydney protest, a few hundred youth who had gathered for a party in Perth turned violent and clashed with the police. The young people threw bottles, rocks and bricks at the police. Consequently, the police used dogs and a helicopter to disperse the crowd. A young man was stabbed and an ambulance was smashed. The size and form of the incident was comparable with the Sydney protest; however, the Perth incident did not capture the media’s attention. It was almost unanimously framed as an ‘out-of-control party’ in the media (for instance see Hickey (2012)). Politicians did not consider this worthy of condemnation or comment. The media’s indifference to the Perth incident and their obsession with the Sydney protest was taken up by Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia as evidence of an anti-Islam agenda in the media. In their statement, the party indicated:

This incident [the Perth incident]—evidently quite similar, if not worse, than the Sydney protests as far as objective facts go—received nowhere near as much media coverage. They were not dubbed the ‘Perth riots’. Politicians did not fall over one another to condemn the violence. Federal Parliament did not see a need to raise the issue and forward bipartisan condemnation. Parents and community leaders in the area were not asked to condemn the behaviour, nor did they themselves go out of their way to condemn the violence. In this there are great lessons for those of insight in the Muslim community and the wider society. It is a clear illustration that the major issue with events in Sydney is not the violence, but the anti-Islamic agenda peddled by media and politicians. In turn we advise all in the Muslim community
and the wider society to not scapegoat the powerless on superficial grounds for the crimes of the powerful (Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia 2012a).

This quote illustrates that some Muslim groups perceive that the media has an anti-Islam agenda. The Perth incident was not framed in relation to broader social, political and cultural concepts. The incident was not framed as an ‘unacceptable face of consumer society’; nor was there any other reference to broader concepts. It was kept at its factual limits (an out-of-control party). In contrast, the Sydney protest was quickly broadened to include concepts such as multiculturalism. The unequal media treatment of these two events became a subject for the TV comedy series ‘The Chaser’ (Boyle 2012).

Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia assumed that an anti-Islamic agenda underpinned media discourses about Islam. But other respondents noted a range of different reasons for the negativities. A number of participants referred to the commercial nature of the media. They stated that the media sensationalises Muslim news to sell more products. Founder of the Forum on Australia’s Islamic Relations (FAIR), Kuranda Seyit, who has been active in the media business for about a decade, said:

Of course the media highlights this because that is what sells stories, not [the news about] Muslims building parks or cleaning up parks or Muslims donating money to charity. They want to show negative stories and that is what makes stories and headlines.

The commercial nature of the media limit its functions. This means that the media do not seek to educate the audience and do not feel responsible for giving a comprehensive account of social and political issues with adequate context. Rather entertainment, news of violence, war, disasters and whatever moves people get priority. Persinger (2010, p.55), drew on her experience as a journalist and argued that in general ‘the media are not in the business of positive news’ and they look for ‘conflicts or a clash between parties’ to make a story. This view naturally does not leave much room for change because sensationalism is considered intrinsic to the media enterprise. This was reflected in some of the respondents’ comments. For instance, Ramzy Elseyed, Vice President of the Islamic Council of Victoria,
said that negative media discourses are ‘always going to be there, they are never going to change’. He referred to a far-right Melbourne radio station:

That’s fine, I actually listen for amusement. I actually find it quite amusing. I shake my head—I can’t believe that! How many ways can you go and speak about this stuff? … It is easy to scapegoat all your problems onto those people who [you say] are coming to take over!

The quote reveals a lack of optimism regarding any possibility of change. Persinger (2010) described her efforts to provide some balance to the negative image of Muslims in the Australian media as an ‘uphill battle’, but maintained that the media’s distorted images are not specific to Muslims, but are also the case with Australian Aboriginals and other social groups.

Other participants made a link between the media and Australian politics. They claimed that Muslims are taken advantage of by political parties for political gains. They asserted that politicians, with the aid of the media, exploit Muslims to create fear and uncertainty in the public. Then they show themselves as protectors of the nation, thereby winning more votes. Keysar Trad, President of Islamic Friendship Association, explained the link between the media and politics by calling it ‘dog whistling’ politics. He related media stories to the political agenda of some politicians:

When John Howard wanted to bring in the Work Choices Legislation, they lifted up the fear of Islam. At the same time, they produced this law, so-called counter terrorism … I heard one commentator saying: Who cares about Work Choices? The most important thing is to deal with this threat of militant Islam. You know, distracting people from these horrific laws that take away the rights of the workers by the fear of Islam.

This is connected with the commercial nature of the media discussed earlier and is predicated on the assumption that the ruling class controls both the media and political power. Other participants indicated that issues such as asylum seekers, the burqa and terrorism, which are highlighted in the media, are part of a political agenda:
Khaled Sukkarieh:

The other fact is that a lot of people have been displaced from Iraq or Afghanistan and they are coming here by boat … Again, it becomes a political issue during election time. So they take that and they say ‘wow!’ and scare people with that. [They say:] ‘Look at all these people who are coming via boat, or: They come to take over our country’, or: ‘Why are they doing this? Why are they jumping queues?’ Again, the debate doesn’t become, with common sense, a structured debate. It becomes an emotional debate. How can I win more votes by scaring more people or by doing different things, so similar things happen when they start to say: ‘Ban the burqa!’ What benefits are there? What agenda is there? Who is driving this?

Atila:

During the [time of the] Howard government … Maybe there were political reasons for it, to keep the government up there, to attain votes, because it is easy to scare people and get their votes, because he kept on saying: ‘I will make the security all over Australia stronger’. So when you show a target as a danger, it is easier to get more votes … So I think they want to use that … at one stage after the 9/11 and Bali bombings that happened in Indonesia, they got a lot of votes through it and it worked!

Ikebal Patel, President of Australian Federation of Islamic Councils:

Certainly as you appreciate, race, ethnicity, colour, sexuality and religion are very very emotive topics. I am sure if I want to have a riot in Sydney, if I go in with some sort of backing; if you are a leader, if you have got some community behind you; if you are a politician, you are a councillor. If you want to start something, you would use any of those topics: religion, ethnicity, race, gender. They are emotive topics, and politicians in Australia certainly have won elections on the back of Islam. There is not any question about it.

These quotes reflect a view that the media are not independent agents in the Australian public sphere. The public sphere is fundamental to democracy because it is here that public
opinion is shaped. The public sphere is by definition outside the political system. It supervises and guides politics (Taylor 1995). The above quotes indicate that some Muslim leaders have a different picture of the media. They see them as part of the political apparatus. So not only do the media seek profits by sensational stories, they are also guided by the agenda of the ruling political parties.

Finally, Salih Yucel, former Imam and a current lecturer at Monash University, referred to another media function, asserting that media discourses put pressure on Muslims to integrate or assimilate into mainstream Australia. Although multiculturalism is the official policy of the state in Australia, Yucel claimed that the media places psychological pressure on Muslims to assimilate. In his view, the media is an agent of the majority (and not necessarily the state), with the goal of assimilating minorities such as Muslims:

I would call it carrot and stick policy… On the one hand they are giving opportunities to Muslims, better opportunities than the country where they came from, and the second thing is that if you do not integrate or assimilate, this is the stick. What is the stick? It is not war or hitting. The stick is psychological pressure which is coming from, let’s say, the media—not all the media, but parts of the mainstream media, some NGOs, maybe some officials in the governments … So that psychology is kind of pushing second and third-generation Muslims to hide their identity. Just imagine, if you walk in the street and because of your colour, you are suspected to be terrorist—you will change your name or hide your identity.

To recap, Muslim leaders feel incapable of influencing media discourses. An important dimension of power is agenda-setting (Lukes 2005). Muslim leaders view themselves as being completely powerless to decide on the nature of their presence in media discourses. They are not able to influence the way they are portrayed in the media. They cannot determine the frame through which they are described. They see themselves as an element in political games or for commercial gains of those in power. Nevertheless, Muslim leaders have taken some action to influence their media representations.
STRATEGIES TO INFLUENCE MEDIA DISCOURSES

Media discourses reflect the ‘discursively mediated dominance’ of the majority over minorities (van Dijk 1996, p.84). The actual social, economic and political inequalities are reflected in the power to access and control media discourses. Australian Muslims are economically and politically disadvantaged in Australia and this is evident in their lack of access to public discourses. Nevertheless, Muslim leaders have attempted to make themselves heard in the media. One strategy has been trying to determine which Muslims talk to the media. This has been a very cumbersome process because there is no strong leadership structure in place, and Muslims are very fragmented. I attended a conference in Melbourne in 2011 that was one of the largest annual gatherings of Australian Muslims. In a panel devoted to media images of Muslims, an Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) panellist supported the establishment of an organisation that would take responsibility for engaging with the media on behalf of all Muslims. Another panellist, while agreeing in principle, said that this plan would not work unless individual Muslims stop talking to the media. She said that the plan would work only if all Muslim individuals, when approached, referred the journalist to that organisation. This demonstrates that some Muslim leaders attempt to coordinate and control Muslim voices in the Australian public. Integrationist leaders seek to centralise Muslim voices even though they meet with resistance.

Over time, Australian Muslim leaders have developed a more coherent approach towards the media. This is evident in the way in which they approached the SBS television program *Insight*. In June 2012, *Insight* planned a program about polygamy in Australia. The show’s producers contacted Muslim organisations and leaders and invited them to participate. The invitation was not welcomed by Muslim leaders. They started negotiations with the show’s producers and raised concerns about the intentions of SBS and the potential consequences of such programs. They referred to previous SBS programs about Muslims and questioned the ‘newsworthiness’ of the topic. The negotiation led to the issuing of a letter with 22 signatories (representing Muslim organisations), declaring that Muslim organisations declined to participate in the program. They claimed that SBS’s attention to Muslims was disproportionate and stated that ‘this topic [polygamy] is not, by any stretch of imagination, deemed an important topic that requires rigorous discussion and debate worth national
public attention at present’. They stated that ‘it is not feasible for Muslim community organisations to have a blanket boycott of *Insight*’ and that they wanted a constructive relationship with the media. They also indicated their preferences with regard to Muslim representation on such programs:

We believe that the best way to engage the Muslim community in the future is to extend an invitation to them to participate in an individual capacity as Australian citizens discussing topics that impact all Australians rather than be asked to participate solely because they are Muslim and being asked to comment on Islamic principles and practices as community leaders (The letter as reproduced in Veiszadeh 2012).

The leaders asserted that the media often approach them within the context of ‘problems’. They said that calling on Muslim leaders to participate in public debates in such contexts only entrenched the image of Muslims as ‘problems’. The Muslim leaders asked SBS to give voice to Muslim leaders on ‘normal’ topics as well. Wolfensberger (1980) argued that the negative image of stigmatised people is diminished by associating with valued social images. This is exactly what Muslim leaders requested, though with little success. They wanted to be represented as ‘normal’ Australians who may have something to say about other social issues. It is interesting to note that, in their letter, they wrote that it was not ‘feasible’ to boycott SBS, indicating how powerless they felt to have any influence over the media. Hence, they attempted to exert control on Muslim communities. Following the unsuccessful negotiations, Muslim leaders issued a statement requesting Australian Muslims not to participate in the show. Muslim leaders noted that previous SBS programs on Islam had received higher ratings than other shows, and SBS’s intention was to win ratings rather than present robust discussions:

We are trying desperately as a community to influence how we are portrayed in mainstream media. The only [way] we can make this a successful campaign and have SBS and other networks take our concerns seriously is to show that we stand together as one and that we are united in our efforts to ensure that Muslims get a fairer hearing in the media (Muslimvillage 2012).
Here again we sense the desperation and powerlessness Muslim leaders feel in accessing the media. Despite the fact that SBS aired the show, Mariam Veiszadeh, one of the signatories and Muslim negotiators with SBS produces, stated that:

‘We’ had achieved what once seemed unachievable. We’d coordinated a unified media response; we’d engaged far and wide, crossing racial, ethnic, community and sectarian lines. We were unified in theory and in practice—believe me, this was no small feat! In hindsight it was by no means a perfect campaign; I would have liked to involve many others, but given the circumstances, it was a stepping-stone to bigger and better media engagement projects (Veiszadeh 2012)

The tone of excitement in this quote demonstrates a sense of power felt with the possibility of being able to produce a united voice. This shows how important it is for integrationist Muslim leaders to become united against media discourses. As indicated in the preceding chapters, the minority can influence majority views by being consistent in their message. This is why the creation of a united voice is so important to the Muslim leaders. They will not be able to exert any influence on media discourses unless they can overcome their diverse and sometimes contradictory public voices.

Muslim organisations have also increased the number of their media releases and tried to comment on Muslim-related issues quickly. They also encourage Muslim youth to seek a university education in media fields and enter the mainstream media business. A number of participants in this study, such as prominent Muslim commentator Rachel Woodlock, viewed this strategy as helpful:

I think the solution to that is to get young Muslims into journalism, get them into politics, get them into areas where they can make a difference … We need to have young Muslims engaging and having better knowledge about Islam and Muslims to write more accurate stories and to not just sort of scream out, you know, of sensational headlines.

Similarly, Atila compared Muslims and Jewish communities and said that Muslims can
learn from the Jewish community:

For example, Jewish society here— if you do a research here, half of the judges in Victoria are of Jewish origin; half of the judges, and media personalities here, you see many of them are of Jewish origin. So that is part of integration as well. You will integrate much better if you go to into every part of society, not just a certain part. I think to speed up that process we need to be like that—Muslims should go into different parts of society. There should be famous Muslim sports people. There should be Muslim celebrities … They [Muslims] are understanding it now, because I have seen quite a number of students who are studying law, media, journalism; there are a lot of them doing it now. So I think they are realising that necessity.

Kimmie said that there are now Muslim people who are on commercial radio and television shows. He claimed that this was not the case 20 years ago and that this shows that Muslims are integrating into the system. Dellal claimed that Australian Muslims have done relatively well in their engagement with public discourses:

Despite all the criticism that Australian Muslim or Muslim communities have received in this country, being accused of lack of integration, I think, in the face of everything that has happened and is happening, is a sense of engagement, which I think is growing stronger and stronger in terms of [a Muslim] political voice, in terms of community voice, and in terms of engagement with the critics. I think it is unique, although we have been classified as not integrating, and not this and not that, I think there is a real and strong development of a phenomenon over the last few years that is very encouraging, and especially among the younger generations.

Australian Muslim leaders have also been able to establish media outlets for themselves. For example, the Muslimvillage.com website and the national newspaper *Crescent Times* have tried to cover Muslim-related news. There have also been confrontations between some Muslim leaders and segments of the media. Keysar Trad said that ‘when representing the community, it is not just talking to the media… sometimes you have to make stands against the very forces that divide society and the very forces that stopping society from allowing minorities to actually take their position and fulfil their potential’. He recounted
his carrying a legal complaint against a well-known talk back radio host, following the Cronulal Riot, where he received a judgement in his favour. He also told of his attempt to combat the activities of a radio station with an anti-Islam agenda through a letter-writing campaign. He requested Muslims to write letters to the companies who advertised their products on the radio. In these letters, they included extracts of the radio programs they thought were racist and asked the companies to withdraw their advertising from the station. He said that this made the station management very nervous, and caused them to call the police, but nothing illegal had been done.

These examples demonstrate that despite the feeling of powerlessness, Muslim leaders have taken action to alter media images of Islam. They see these efforts as crucial to influencing Australian public attitudes towards Muslims. The media frames have to change, they said, if Muslims are to be viewed as normal Australians.

CONCLUSION

Media discourses undermine the normalisation process of Australian Muslims. Integrationist Muslim leaders seek to normalise the public image of Muslims and Islam. However, the media provide a biased image of Muslim identity in public, one that is largely associated with negative attributes such as violence and terrorism. The participants in this study claimed that the media give voice to a minority of Muslim radicals without providing adequate context. Therefore, what is aberrant in Muslim communities comes to be depicted as the norm in media representations. This way of painting Muslims, however, was not attributed to the evil intentions of journalists. The interviewees mentioned a number of factors such as the commercial nature of the media and the influence of politics as reasons for the negative elements of media discourses. This has resulted in the stigmatisation of Muslims.

Muslim leaders have attempted to influence public media images about Islam. They have developed their own media outlets and encouraged Muslims to study journalism in order to be able to enter mainstream media enterprises. These strategies reflect the reality that Muslims feel powerless in Australia. They are not able to have any impact on public
discourses that relate to them. They think that the development of a united voice would provide them with a better standing in dealing with the media and will then facilitate the normalisation process.
CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

Social integration is a contested concept. There is no consensual definition for the social integration of migrants into contemporary ethnically and religiously-diverse societies. Different stakeholders (for example the state, minority advocates and non-governmental organisations) advance dissimilar definitions and separate indicators for measuring social integration (Castles et al. 2001). This definitional ambiguity has encumbered and complicated public debates on social integration and multiculturalism. In the policy area, social integration has often been associated with initiatives for the improvement of migrants’ access to the job market, housing, healthcare, education and other social services. This tendency is apparent in European countries and in Australia (Wagner 2007; O’Brien & Penna 2006; Australian Government 2008; Yasmeen 2010). By and large, these policies address migrants’ socio-economic disadvantages and are rooted in functionalism theory.

I have argued that functionalism does not provide an adequate account of the integration of ethnic and religious minorities into contemporary multicultural societies. Classical functionalists, such as Durkheim, did not examine the role of ethnic diversity vis-à-vis social solidarity. This is partly because they were more concerned with the disintegrative forces of industrialisation, urbanisation, revolutions and bureaucratisation, which had jeopardised the social cohesion of European countries in the nineteenth century.

Ethnic diversity came under sociological analysis as late as the 1920s as a result of the mass immigration of Europeans to America in the early twentieth century. In addition to this historical reason, there was also an analytic reason for not discussing cultural diversity. For Durkheim (1964), culture is the source of social cohesion in an industrial and organic society, with its intensive division of labour. Industrial societies contain a high level of differentiation among the institutions of economy, politics, religion, media and so forth. At the same time, these differentiated spaces are interconnected through a common system of norms and values. If the common normative system were disrupted, society would collapse into anomie. However, in contemporary western societies multiple cultures and normative systems coexist, indicating that functionalism theory needs to be revised in order to account for cultural diversity.
The growth of cultural diversity in western societies, especially after the Second World War, sparked discussions about diversity management in both academic and policy circles. Ethnic diversity came to be seen as a new social phenomenon, influencing the social order and social cohesion of western societies. Two major theory and policy frameworks emerged in response to the issue of ethnic diversity over the course of twentieth century: assimilation and multiculturalism. Although the two were conceptualised in opposition to one another, both highlighted the role of ethnic visibility and cultural identity in relation to social cohesion, social order and social justice. This is to say that minorities’ cultures and identities were given a significant place in the conception of social integration and social cohesion.

Culture has also become a system of social stratification and a basis for social exclusion. Ethnic cultures do not possess an equal status with White culture in Australia (Hage 1998). This is apparent in discourses demanding migrants to adopt Australian values or the Australian way of life. Muslims sit at the bottom of the cultural status hierarchy in Australia (Hage 2006). Australian Muslims, like other Muslim minorities in the West, are often associated with terrorism, violence, fanaticism and misogyny in the media, and are perceived as a threat to multiculturalism (Hage 2006; Parekh 2005). In such a cultural and political context, Australian Muslims could not fully integrate into broader society unless their religion, culture and identity are normalised in the Australian public sphere.

In this study, social integration has been defined as a normalisation process for negatively-valued social groups. Stigmatised individuals and groups are considered normal when they possess a status comparable with mainstream individuals and groups. This definition has been used in the context of disability studies and particularly in Social Role Valorisation theory (Wolfensberger 1980). I have extended this definition to the context of ethnic studies and suggested that the normalisation process could be enacted by the stigmatised group itself or facilitated/enforced by mainstream society. In the first case, Goffman’s (1963) notion of stigma management is helpful in explaining the process through which stigmatised groups take on various strategies to valorise their status. They may conceal their stigma or fabricate a new identity. They may also normalise the stigma by downplaying its importance. Mainstream society may also put in place actions to make
minorities conform to the dominant norms, values and worldview. Foucault’s (1995) concept of normalisation, as an instrument of disciplinary power, offers insight into this process.

This thesis has focused on the issue of the social integration of Muslim migrants into Australian society, and has investigated the ways in which a group of Muslim leaders attempt to normalise their status in Australia. It should be noted that normalisation, when enacted by minorities, presupposes the acceptance of the existing power relations and cultural status hierarchy. Therefore, it is only one framework of action among many. Minorities may reject the entire existing normative system and seek to change it. These separate responses exist among Muslim leaders, and I have used the concept of normalisation to demonstrate the variations.

The concept of normalisation has been very helpful in accounting for the actions and strategies of integrationist Australian Muslim leaders with regard to social integration. The majority of leaders interviewed in this study related their initial source of activism to overseas events such as the Gulf War, the Bosnian War and more importantly, the September 11 terrorist attacks. This is because these overseas events precipitated a wave of negative discourses about Islam in Australia. These leaders then became motivated to make a move to respond to these derogatory discourses. Muslims’ dissatisfaction with public discourses about and media representations of Islam have come up in almost every study of Australian Muslims. This demonstrates the fact that Muslims do not feel respected in the Australian public sphere. The evidence provided throughout this thesis shows that integrationist Muslim leaders are very critical of the fact that they have been singled out in public discourses. They believe that the media’s disproportionate attention to Muslim radicals has de-normalised Muslim identity. To them, social integration of Muslims cannot proceed smoothly as long as Muslim identity is not normalised in media representations.

To achieve this goal of a normal status, integrationist leaders have developed several organisational and discursive strategies, and these have been described throughout the thesis. Their main goal has been to change the image of Islam in the Australian public sphere. These efforts are intrinsically dramaturgical. Dramaturgical actions are those that
aim to craft a positive image of oneself in the mind of an audience (Goffman 1959). The normalisation process enacted by integrationist leaders is a dramaturgical process and follows the general rules of dramaturgical actions aptly described by Goffman (1959).

For the development of a normal image in the public sphere, it has been essential to attempt to exercise control on the voices that reach the public. Any successful presentation of self requires a level of control on the information available to the audience. Integrationist leaders have strived towards this. They have attempted to apply structural adjustments to Muslim leadership so that the production of ‘normal’ voices is facilitated and extremist voices are controlled. Integrationist leaders have enhanced internal communication between separate Muslim groups with the hope of producing a more coordinated and united Muslim public voice.

Integrationist leaders have also tried to regulate Imams’ activities and voices in Australia because in many instances they have been provocative and controversial. The establishment of the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC), media workshops for Imams, and the training of local Imams are examples of attempts to normalise Imam’s voices. Another strategy has been the encouragement of Muslim youth to take leadership positions. The leaders have assumed that, compared with first-generation Muslims, Muslim youth are more competent in English and possess greater cultural capital. These advantages enable them to communicate better with the media, the state and other stakeholders. Muslim youth were thought to be capable of removing the picture of Muslims as ‘foreigners’. Muslim women have been also encouraged to come on board, in order to try to eliminate the image of Islam as being patriarchal and oppressive towards women.

The normalisation process undertaken by integrationist leaders also has discursive aspects. The dominant Orientalist discourses situate Islam in opposition to the West and outside the space of ‘normal’ in western societies. Integrationist Muslim leaders repudiate these discourses and put forward alternatives. They deny any intrinsic tension between Islamic values and Australian values and paint a western-friendly picture of Islam. They argue for the emergence of an Australian Islam that is uniquely developed out of the Australian cultural and political environment. They renounce those discourses that assign peculiarity
and oddity to Australian Muslims. Their alternative discourses seek to normalise the status of Muslim identity so that Muslims can feel and be Australian.

These endeavours, however, are contested. There are extremist Muslim voices that undermine the normalisation process. They disrupt the consistency of the message integrationist leaders attempt to communicate to the public. The minority influence theory (Moscovici 1985) suggests that a minority could be capable of influencing the majority’s view if they remain consistent in their words and deeds. The extremists produce discrepant voices in public, thereby subverting the discourses of integrationist leaders. Instead, they validate and reinforce the dominant Orientalist discourses. Two extremist groups were investigated in this study: Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia (HTA) and Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamm'ah Association of Australia (ASWJAA).

The media also disrupts the normalisation process. Integrationist leaders claim that media coverage of extremists is out of proportion with their number and influence. These distorted images disempower integrationist leaders. Although integrationist leaders feel powerless to change what happens in the media, they have attempted to exert some influence over media representations through coordinating a united Muslim voice.

Normalisation was a very helpful concept in explaining the understanding and activities of the Australian Muslim leaders interviewed in this study. In Chapter Two, I delved into the conceptual and theoretical aspects of this concept. In the following paragraphs, I explain the advantages of the normalisation framework by comparing it with the theories of assimilation and multiculturalism. I argue that normalisation is very helpful in accounting for the discourses and activities of Australian Muslim leaders in relation to social integration.

**The concept of normalisation**

First, it is necessary to reiterate the theoretical underpinnings of the normalisation framework. The normalisation framework rests on a social constructionist perspective. Social constructionism claims that a social problem is a problem when people think it is a
problem (Loseke & Best 2003). With regard to social integration, it is quite conceivable that a social group is not objectively integrated into the wider social, cultural and political institutions, but is not perceived as problematic as far as social cohesion is concerned. By objective integration, I refer to participation in the institutions of market, education, politics, social clubs and so forth. For instance, Christian conservative groups such as The Exclusive Brethren in Australia or the Amish community in the United States live quite separately from the mainstream. However, unlike Muslim conservatives, they have not been referred to and constructed as being not-integrated and a social problem. A social group, whether or not it is objectively integrated, is not problematic unless people come to think of it as a problem. Social institutions such as the state, the media and education play a large role in the construction of a group as problematic, integrated, or not-integrated. The normalisation framework is predicated upon this theoretical approach.

The objective integration of Muslims is not the focus of the normalisation process. Rather, the issue is the constructed image of Muslims as ‘problem’. The primary goal of the normalisation process is the elimination of ‘Muslim’ as a problematic category in the Australian public sphere. If this succeeds, Muslims will not then be thought of and represented as a problem, even though some Muslims may live separate lives. Expressed differently, invisibility to the public gaze and being integrated are intimately connected. This is evident in the intense sensitivities of Muslim leaders to media images and representations demonstrated in this thesis and in many other studies.

This constructionist underpinning of normalisation differentiates it from assimilation theories. Assimilation theories explain the objective social processes regardless of dominant discourses and representations. In contrast, normalisation lies essentially in the realm of the discursive fields of society and representations. The New Assimilation and Segmented Assimilation theories, two newly-emerged theories of assimilation, are more concerned with objective socio-economic assimilation of migrants (Alba & Nee 1997, Portes & Zhou 1993, Brubaker 2001). They do not focus on the non-material aspects of social integration, which is the focus of my normalisation thesis. The Muslim leaders interviewed in this study emphasised prejudices, stereotypes and misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims in the public. In their view, negative public discourses affected the
objective integration of Muslims. Prejudices and stereotypes can perpetuate Muslims’ predicaments in the job market, slow down identity formation and impede social mobility.

Cultural assimilation is also different from the notion of normalisation. Early assimilation theories focussed on cultural assimilation as an ‘inevitable’ social process (Park & Miller 1921, p.308). In their view, cultural assimilation was an objective and self-propelling social process. The data described throughout this thesis to some extent affirm this view. A number of participants raised the idea of ‘Australian Islam’. This idea was generally viewed positively by integrationist leaders. In part, this implies a social process of cultural assimilation. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the idea of Australian Islam, whether or not it is realised in the future, could be seen as a discursive tool for normalisation purposes. It purports to break down the perception of Islam as a set of fixed beliefs and values inherently incompatible with Australia. Furthermore, to Muslim leaders, Islam as it is now does not inhibit the social integration of Muslims. They believe that most Muslims have already integrated into Australian society. If there is a problem with Muslim’ integration, it is because of misconceptions and misrepresentations of Islam in public discourses.

The above points show why the concept of assimilation, whether socio-economic or cultural, cannot explain the data presented throughout this thesis. Unlike assimilation, normalisation has a focus on the discursive and political aspects of social integration. This is to say that instead of requiring minorities to change and assimilate, normalisation focuses on the representation of minorities in mainstream discourses and aims to normalise minorities’ image in the public sphere. This means that the notion of normalisation is conceptually closer to multiculturalism and recognition theories.

I have drawn on the literature of multiculturalism at various points in this thesis. Taylor (1992) has proffered the soundest theory of multiculturalism around the concept of recognition. In Taylor’s conception of recognition, cultures are worthy of equal respect: ‘The claim is that all human cultures that have animated whole societies over some considerable stretch of time have something important to say to all human beings’ (1992, p.66). In other words, multiculturalism requires not only tolerance of other cultures, but also acknowledgement of their worth: ‘We all recognize the equal value of different
cultures; that we not only let them survive, but acknowledge their *worth*’ (1992, p.64, italics in the original). Although this statement sounds idealist and humanist, it is a far cry from being accepted within dominant western discourses.

Elsewhere, Taylor (2006) acknowledged that a sense of superiority is inherent in western culture. This sense of superiority, although has been disguised in euphemism, has been one of the roots of modern nationalist and religious movements in third-world countries (Taylor 2006). Western culture prides itself on its accomplishments in individualism, democracy, secularism, gender equality, liberalism, modern art, technological advancements and so forth. The language of developed countries versus developing countries demonstrates the privileged position of western societies in public discourse.

It is true that in recent decades post-modernism, post-colonialism and multiculturalism have partly challenged the dominant Eurocentric discourses. It is also true that many western countries, including Australia, have adopted multiculturalism as official state policy. Nevertheless, these developments have not become the dominant mode of thought in western discourses. The mere adoption of a policy of multiculturalism by states does not imply that western cultures view other cultures as their equal counterpart. Hage (1998) has shown that Australian multiculturalism has reinforced White supremacy through the saliency of ‘tolerance’ discourse. The superiority of western culture over other cultures and civilisations is well embedded in today’s western narratives and discourses. Fukuyama (1995, p.318) articulated this narrative: ‘The more one is familiar with different cultures, the more one understands that they are not created equal’. In such a cultural climate, it does not seem to be feasible and realistic to expect ordinary citizens to accept Taylor’s view. In contrast with Taylor’s normatively-loaded theory, normalisation does not require the recognition of equal worth of cultures. Social integration does not require such recognition. Social integration is realised when minority cultures are seen as normal and non-problematic as far as the social order is concerned.

Furthermore, normalisation explains the process of social integration and lends itself to measurement and empirical studies better than the concept of recognition. A social group is defined as normal when the dominant institutions of a democratic society (particularly the
state, the media and the education system) do not assign negative attributes to the group. This definition can be operationalised easily. In comparison, the concept of recognition is ambiguous as to who has to recognise minority cultures and how. Take, for instance, the institutions of state and media. A state that has adopted multiculturalism develops policies in support of the maintenance of ethnic cultures. Nonetheless, the state is not in a position to recognise the ‘worth’ (Taylor’s argument) of a culture. This is simply because a liberal state, by definition, should remain impartial to cultural worldviews and the ‘conception of the good’ (Rawls 2005, p.19). In contrast, it is more plausible to demand that the state not securitise, single out and de-normalise a minority through its policies. By the same token, it is not meaningful to ask the media to recognise and respect minorities. Is it considered non-recognition if the media criticise practices of a minority group? How much criticism amounts to non-recognition? This ambiguity does not exist in the concept of normalisation. It makes good sense to ask or to devise strategies for a more balanced representation of minorities to communicate a normal image of them.

The data provided throughout this thesis lend themselves very well to the normalisation framework. The issues Muslim leaders are concerned about are being singled out, securitised, and the disproportionate media focus on the negative aspects of Muslim communities. Social integration to them is about being able to live in Australia and practise their religion as do other social groups. They want to be represented and treated as normal Australian citizens. This way they will feel recognised and respected. These remarks demonstrate that normalisation provides a more nuanced conceptual framework than does recognition for explaining the data gathered in this study.

**Religion, Muslim leadership, and social integration**

This thesis has also offered insights into the role of religion in the process of social integration. The study has painted a picture of religion very different to that contained within the discourse of Orientalism. Orientalism is bound up with culturalism. Culturalism assigns an overwhelming role to culture in shaping humans’ life choices, beliefs and practices. The best example of culturalism is Weber’s (1930) *The Protestant Ethics and The*
Spirit of Capitalism. In this book, Weber attributed the emergence of European capitalism to the work ethic and teachings of Protestantism, particularly Calvinism. This implied that religion was powerful enough to determine humans’ behaviours towards an entire new social order.

Orientalism is a school of thought that explains Muslim-related issues primarily in reference to Islamic teachings and Islamic texts. Roy (2011a, p.91; 2004) argued that western discourses about Islam and Muslims are culturalist and suffer from what he called a ‘theological bias’. The findings of this study run counter to culturalism, and show that Muslims’ attitudes and actions are not moulded by eternal, divine and unchanging religious teachings. Rather, Muslims are profoundly conditioned by their surrounding social, cultural and political environment. Islam is interpreted by Muslims in ways that fit the realities of their lives. As do humans, ideas and religions travel and adapt to new cultural contexts (Geertz 1968; Said 1983). Humans carry and shape religions—not vice versa. In the final analysis, nothing is outside the realm of the ‘social’ and its contingencies. This is evident in differentiations and re-groupings of Muslim leaders in response to their wider political circumstances.

The relationship with majority Australia has influenced the divisions and fragmentations in Australian Muslim leadership. New configurations have emerged that are neither rooted in Islam nor in Muslim history. Rather, they are deeply bound up with the dynamics of power and status between Muslim minorities and wider society. The dominant homogenising discourses (Hopkins 2008) have forced Muslims, from various schools of thought, to sit together and work out ways to defend their shared religion and identity. It has enhanced internal communication between Australian Muslim leaders and led to re-alignments. Muslim leadership is evolving so that Muslim women are finding stronger voices. A new class of young, educated, elite Muslims has emerged in the Australian public to debate Islamophobia. Although these Muslim elites do not claim to be religious scholars, they speak about the nature of Islam, and in particular they clarify what Islam should not be associated with (for example terrorism, violence and patriarchy). They promote and reinforce one interpretation of Islam over others. These developments are intimately connected with wider Australian discourses about Islam. Hence it is very simplistic to
picture Muslim communities as groups following a fixed set of beliefs and attitudes irrespective of their surrounding economic, cultural and political environment. This implies that debates about Muslims’ integration have to include the dynamics of power and status rather than paying overwhelming attention to Islamic values and their compatibility with Australian values.

Muslim leadership has also been deeply influenced by Australian government policy. Throughout this thesis, and particularly in the literature review, I have emphasised the role of the Australian government in supporting integrationist leaders. The effect of government sponsorship was almost absent from the narrative of integrationist leaders. They craft their language and discourses without serious regard to the actions of the state. Their arguments are shaped by the values and norms of Muslim communities. In contrast, extremist Muslim leaders highlight the connection between integrationist leaders’ discourses and state funding. They view integrationist leaders as being co-opted by the state. This demonstrates how external factors and forces can influence the internal dynamics of Muslim leadership. It also shows the intricate relationships that exist between Muslim communities and the institutions of wider society.

All these bear witness to the fact that social integration of Australian Muslims should not be limited to the socio-economic aspects. This study has highlighted the significance of the non-material aspects of integration and has assigned an important role to the realm of public representations and discourses. To most participants in this study, social integration of Muslims requires the normalisation of Muslim identity in Australia’s public milieu. For them, social integration and invisibility to the gaze of power go hand in hand.
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: List of Participants

Abdo, Maha: President of Muslim Women’s Association. Maha has been active in the field of leadership training for Muslim women—particularly young women, in interfaith dialogues and in providing services for Muslim women who come as migrants or refugees to Australia. She represented Muslim women in the New South Wales Premier’s Council for Women for four years. She is of Lebanese descent.

Abdel-Fattah, Randa: prominent Muslim in Australia. She is frequently consulted by the media on Muslim-related issues. She writes in Australian newspapers and appears on television programs regarding Palestine and Australian Muslims. She is of Palestinian and Egyptian heritage.

Ahmed, Berhan: African-Australian community leader and Chair of the African Think Tank. Ahmed was the winner of the 2009 Victorian Australian of the Year. He is also a Senior Research Fellow at the Department of Forest Ecosystem Science at the University of Melbourne. He was the first African Australian to run for Parliament in 2004. He is of Eritrean origin.

Atila, Omer: Executive Advisor at the Australian Intercultural Society. He is of Turkish origin.

Abu Ayman: Founder of Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamma’h Association of Australia (ASWJAA). He is of Jordanian origin.

Badar, Uthman: media representative of Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia. Badar is a PhD candidate in Economics at the University of Western Sydney. He is of Pakistani origin.

Cleland, Bilal: the most prominent historian of Islam and Muslims in Australia. Cleland served as Secretary of the Australian Federation of Islamic Council (AFIC) and Secretary of the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) for several years. He is of Anglo-Australian origin.

Chopra, Tasneem: President of the Islamic Women’s Welfare Council of Victoria. Chopra has been involved with the council for 20 years and is of Kenyan origin.

Chowdhury, Nayeefa: founding Director of an Internet-based Islamic information service (Light of Islam.net). She has been active in Muslim student associations and the Bengali community in Australia. Chowdhury is of Bangladeshi origin.

Cooper, Aziz: Prison Chaplaincy Co-ordinator at the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV). He was the first Australian Muslim to coordinate prison chaplaincy in Australia. Cooper serves
on the Chaplain's Advisory Committee to the criminal justice sector in Victoria. He is of Anglo-Australian origin.

Dellal, Hass: President of Australian Multicultural Foundation since 1989. He was appointed as a Director of the SBS Board for five years from 3 June 2010. He is also Chairman of the Centre for Multicultural Youth, and Chairman of the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies Consultative Committee (Melbourne University). He is of Turkish origin.

Elsyed, Ramzi: Vice president of the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV). He was formerly the president of ICV. Elsyed is of Lebanese origin.

Hassan, Sherene: Secretary and Board member of the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV). She was formerly the vice president of ICV. Hassan is also a Board member of Islamic Museum of Australia. She is of Egyptian and Iraqi origin.

Kimmie, Nazid: prominent Muslim artist, poet and writer. Kimmie was active in holding the exhibition ‘YOU AM I’ in Melbourne. He participates in interfaith dialogues and is of South African background.

Mehboub, Amjad: former president of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC). He served in this position over two decades. He is of Egyptian background.

Morsi, Yassir: President of Victoria’s Muslim Student Associations. He is of Egyptian background.

Patal, Ikebal: President of Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC), the peak body of Australian Muslim communities. He was initially Secretary of the Islamic Society of ACT, and then Treasurer of AFIC for two terms. He is of Fijian origin and is an electrical engineer.

Raihman, Zubeda: Treasurer of the Muslim Women’s National Network Australia. She is Fijian.

Saral, Mehmet: co-founder and President of the Affinity Intercultural Foundation. He is of Turkish origin.

Seyit, Seyfi: founder of the Forum on Australia’s Islamic Relations (FAIR). He is a film maker and was formerly the Media Liaison Officer for AFIC and Editor of the Australian Muslim News. Seyit is of Turkish origin.

Shkembi, Nur: Arts Officer at the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV). Shkembi is also the Muslim representative on the Arts and Culture Committee of the Parliament of World's Religions.

Sukkarieh, Khaled: Chairman of the Islamic Council of New South Wales (ICNSW). He is of Lebanese origin.
Sukkarieh, Omeima: Manager of the Auburn Community Development Network, and a nominee for the Australian of the Year 2011. She is of Lebanese origin.

Toohey, Monique: Toohey has been active in the development of student counselling services in Islamic schools. She has been active in the Muslim Youth Summit Project. She has also been active in managing conferences for the Islamic Council of Victoria, the Centre for Multicultural Youth and the Australian Multicultural Foundation. She is also a participant in the Asialink Leaders program. Toohey runs Nasihah Consulting, a private psychology clinic. She is of Anglo-Australian origin.

Trad, Keysar: President of the Islamic Friendship Association and former Director of the Lebanese Muslim Association (LMA). He is frequently consulted by the media on issues related to Muslims in Australia. Trad is of Lebanese background.

Woodlock, Rachel: Woodlock is a prominent Muslim who writes for Australian newspapers. She is of Anglo-Australian origin.

Yucel, Salih: Yucel is a lecturer in the Centre for Studies in Religion and Theology at Monash University. He was the Deputy Mufti of Samsat and Akcakale, Turkey, from 1984 to 1987 as part of the Diyanet—The Ministry of Religious Affairs. He came to Australia as an Imam in 1987 and served as Imam of the Redfern Mosque, Sydney, from 1987 to 1993. He was the first Muslim Chaplain serving at the Department of Corrective Services, NSW, from 1991 to 1997. He has also served as a chaplain in several institutions in the United States from 1998 to 2007. Yucel is active in inter-faith dialogue and is of Turkish origin.

Anonymous participants:

*Kamal*: Muslim leader occupying high organisational positions within Muslim organisations.

*Sara*: Muslim public commentator.

*Fatima*: Muslim public commentator.
Appendix 2: Ethics approval

To: Dr Karen Farquharson, FLSS/Mr Mohammad Hadi Sohrabi Haghighat

Dear Dr Farquharson,

SUHREC Project 2010/123 Muslims public figures' views of Australian Islam
Dr Karen Farquharson, FLSS/Mr Mohammad Hadi Sohrabi Haghighat
Approved Duration: 21/06/2010 To 21/10/2012

I refer to the ethical review of the above project protocol undertaken on behalf of Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) by SUHREC Subcommittee (SHESC4) at a meeting held on 4 June 2010. Your response to the review as e-mailed on 17 June was put to a nominated SHESC4 delegate for consideration. [You will have received a separate e-mail today regarding a minor amendment to be made.]

I am pleased to advise that, as submitted to date, the project has approval to proceed in line with standard on-going ethics clearance conditions here outlined.

- All human research activity undertaken under Swinburne auspices must conform to Swinburne and external regulatory standards, including the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and with respect to secure data use, retention and disposal.

- The named Swinburne Chief Investigator/Supervisor remains responsible for any personnel appointed to or associated with the project being made aware of ethics clearance conditions, including research and consent procedures or instruments approved. Any change in chief investigator-supervisor requires timely notification and SUHREC endorsement.

- The above project has been approved as submitted for ethical review by or on behalf of SUHREC. Amendments to approved procedures or instruments ordinarily require prior ethical appraisal/clearance. SUHREC must be notified immediately or as soon as possible thereafter of (a) any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants and any redress measures; (b) proposed changes in protocols; and (c) unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

- At a minimum, an annual report on the progress of the project is required as well as at the conclusion (or abandonment) of the project.

- A duly authorised external or internal audit of the project may be undertaken at any time.
Please contact me if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance. The SUHREC project number should be quoted in communication. Chief Investigators/Supervisors and Student Researchers should retain a copy of this e-mail as part of project record-keeping.

Best wishes for the project.
Yours sincerely

Kaye Goldenberg
Secretary, SHESC4

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