

# UNDERSTANDING MUSLIM IDENTITY THROUGH MULTIPLE LENSES: Insights from a minority group in Australia

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## ABSTRACT

Who Muslims are and what they actually do in their daily life are topics of much interest for many people. Muslims have been defined from different lenses. Some scholars suggest that Muslims are those whose parents are Muslims; while others view it differently. In this present time, studies on Muslim identity have been conducted by some Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. This article aims at exploring understanding Muslim identity from multiple lenses. In doing so, I review literature from Muslim sacred texts, the Holy Quran and also the saying of the Prophet Muhammad PbuH. I first reviewed verses of the Qur'an and also the hadith related to the nature of Muslim identity. In addition, I reviewed research literature exploring Muslim identity and identified several notions of Muslim identity. The article found that Muslims' sacred texts define Muslim identity through the practice of Islamic sacred texts. While research on Muslim identity define Muslims as not only limited to religious practices but also to other attributes.

## KEYWORDS

muslim identity; religious texts; construction of muslim identity

## INTRODUCTION

In this article, I examine the ways in which young Muslims of Indonesian background, living in Australia construct their Muslim identity in relation to their families and the religious spaces of the *ummah*. To understand Muslim identity, I work with two bodies of literature in my article. Firstly, I draw on the interpretations of the Muslim religious texts, the *Qur`ān* (The Muslim Holy book)

and the *Hadith* (The Prophet traditions) to understand the ways in which Muslim identity is represented in these religious texts. For Muslims, the *Qur`ān* is the main source of guidance in their lives, in which *Allāh* prescribes the Islamic principles (Guessoum, 2008; Saeed, 2008) to be adhered to by Muslims. In addition, the *Hadith*, the prophet Muhammad's actions and remarks, is also seen as the main religious text that provides guidance in being Muslim, and thus the teaching of the *Qur`ān* and the *Hadith* shapes Muslim identity (Duderija, 2010a).

In understanding ways of being Muslim as represented in the religious texts, I first identify some verses of the *Qur`ān* and some *Hadith* that provide an understanding of Muslim identity. I then draw on the works of *Ibn Kathir*, a *mufasssir*. A *mufasssir* is an Islamic exegete who knows and narrates the religious texts of *Qur`ān* and *Hadith*. The exegesis is a critical explanation or interpretation of a text, especially a religious text. There are many Islamic exegeses or *tafsir* for Muslims to refer to, such as *Tafsir Al-Manār*, *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* and other *tafsir* on the interpretation of the *Qur`ān*. The works of *Ibn Kathir* are commonly used in the Indonesian-Muslim community here in Australia and in Indonesia as well.

The second body of literature that I engage with relates to the social and cultural construction of Muslim identity, since social settings shape Muslim identity and vice versa. I draw on the work of Muslim scholars studying Islam and Muslims in the west, such as Tariq Ramadan (2004), Jasmin Zine (2008), Alia Salem Imtoul (2006), Tehmina Naz Basit (1995), Samina Yasmeen (2008) and Ansuman Ahmed Mondal (2008). They argue that the conceptualization of Muslim identity is located in the interplay of discourses of religious texts, and the social and cultural lived experiences of young Muslims.

I provide a discussion on the roles of Muslim families and the *ummah* in shaping young Muslim's identity. In Islam, Muslim parents and the *ummah* have the responsibility to take on an educational role in developing their children's minds, bodies and souls. Thus, Muslim families and the religious spaces within the *ummah* are considered as educational and social sites for the identity formation of Muslim youth.

## MUSLIM IDENTITY

In this section, I explain two interrelated issues. First, I discuss the conception of Muslim identity as prescribed by the religious texts. This is one of the theoretical frameworks used in this study. In the second sub-section, I draw on the understanding of Muslim identity as conceptualized by some Muslim scholars whose work provides insights into Muslim communities in the West as well as their ways of being Muslim.

### ***The Qur`ān, and the Hadith: The conceptions of Muslim identity***

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) is one of the theorists who problematises the notion of discourse in his work. Sara Mills suggests that various meanings of discourse are proposed by Foucault in a number of his different works. One of these meanings is that it constitutes the meaningful utterance that has an effect on something;

another definition is seen as being a group of statements that provide a certain meaning (Mills, 2003); discourse is also seen as practices, which are governed through unwritten rules (Mills, 2003). These varied meanings convey a somewhat similar understanding of discourse, which is that it consists of unwritten rules and statements that individualize certain groups of people, and regulate their practices.

According to Foucault, some religious texts such as the Bible in Christianity can be a source of rules that regulate discourses or statements, to which people, such as political figures frequently refer, to back up their points. In my work, I consider the Muslim Holy Book, the *Qur`ān* as an important source of discourses of Muslim identity and practices, since it is the sacred book referred to by Muslims around the world (see also Saeed, 2008). For many Muslims, the *Qur`ān* and the *Hadith* are important sources of Islamic discourses, which guide and frame ways of being Muslim (Guessoum, 2008). The religious texts of Islam, the *Qur`ān*<sup>1</sup> and the *Hadith* of the prophet Muhammad (PbuH<sup>2</sup>) provide important markers of Muslim identity. Some prominent themes of the *Qur`ān* are *Imān* (faith), *Akhlāq* (conduct) and *Ibadāt* (ritual), which characterize ways of being Muslim (Mir, 2007).

The *Imān* is an expression of the Muslims' faith addressed in the first pillar of Islam, the *Shahāda*, and is the key component of Islamic identity (Esposito, 2010; Marranci, 2008; Ramadan, 2004; Rippin, 2005). It is a declaration that there is none worthy of worship but *Allāh* and that the Prophet Muhammad is His final messenger. The *Akhlāq* relates the approved forms of conduct of Muslims as prescribed by the *Qur`ān*. For example, it is stated in the Muslims' religious texts that Muslims should ensure that their conversations and actions do not harm others. It is also stated in the *Qur`ān* that Muslims are encouraged to respect their elders such as parents. Muslims are not to engage in derogatory acts toward other people, be they Muslims or non Muslims alike.

The Prophet Muhammad (PbuH), as reported by *Al-Bukhāri* and also reported by *Hakim*, *Ahmad*, and *Ibn Asakir*<sup>3</sup>, said that:

Indeed, I was sent to the world to perfect and purify the conduct and the behaviour of the human being

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<sup>1</sup> *Qur`ān* is the Arabic word for 'recitation' or 'reading'; various names are applied to the *Qur`ān*: "revelation (*tanzil*), the reminder (*dhikr*), the creation (*Furqan*) and the scripture (*kitab*)" (Saeed, 2008, p. 38). The *Qur`ān*, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him more than fourteen centuries ago, contains major issues ranging from theological and ritual to social issues (Saeed, 2008)

<sup>2</sup> PbuH stands for Peace be upon Him (the Prophet Muhammad); it is a noble title that should go with the prophet Muhammad. It means that all Muslims who mention the prophet's name should use this title; it is highly recommended for Muslims to do so.

<sup>3</sup> These persons are some of the collectors and preservers of the *Hadith*. This *Hadith* is reported in the collection of *Al-Bukhāri*, no 273, and reported by *Al-Hakim* in his book, no. 163/2, and by *Ahmad*, no. 318, and by *Ibn Asakir*, no. 8, p.21

This *Hadith* suggests that one of the main teachings of Islam is the perfection of one's behaviour. In fact, the prophet as narrated by Abu Musa also asserted that:

The best among you is the one who behaves best toward people (This *Hadith* is reported in *syahih Bukhāri*-the collection of *Bukhāri*, no. 8, p. 21)

In a similar tone, the *Qur`ān* states that:

You will never attain piety until you spend of what you love. And anything you spend of, God has full knowledge of it (*Ali-Imran*, 92).

The *Hadith* and the *ayāt* also encourage Muslims to be respectful in their interactions with fellow human beings. The other important component of the *Qur`ānic* teaching is the *Ibadāt* (Ramadan, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2004), the ritual. These include: *salāt*, the five daily prayers; *sawm*, fasting in the month of *Ramadhan*; *zakāt*, alms giving to the poor, and *hajj* or pilgrimage to Mecca. The observance of these Islamic rituals can be a framework to measure Muslims' religious piety (Hassan, 2008) and it marks the character of the believer (Rippin, 2005). That *Ibadāt* is a significant marker of Muslim identity has been stated in the *Qur`ān*:

Who performs the *salāt* and spends out of what We have provided them, it is they who are the believers in truth (*Al-Anfaal*, 3-4)<sup>4</sup>.

The requirement for Muslims to have faith in *Allāh*, the God Almighty, to observe good conduct during personal and social interactions and to worship faithfully has become the central identity marker for Muslims. The discourses of religious texts identify that those who are considered Muslims are those who possess these identity markers.

In addition, the *Qur`ān* covers the issue of modesty. It requires believing men and women to cover certain private parts of their body. The issue of modesty is more emphasized in respect of believing women than it is for believing men. In spite of the controversy in the interpretation of the messages from the *Qur`ān*, mainstream Muslim communities see these messages as religious requirements, and thus as Muslim-specific markers. The obligation to cover certain parts of the body is revealed in the following two *ayāt*.

Say to believing women that they should lower their gaze and remain chaste and not to reveal their adornments – save what is normally apparent thereof, and they should fold their shawls over their bosoms (*An-Nur*, 31)

O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and wives of the believers that they should draw over themselves some of the outer garments [when in public], so as to be recognized and not harmed (*Al-Ahzab*, 59)

One of the most prominent Muslim scholars in the Islamic world, *Ibn Kathir* sees these two verses as the command to cover certain private parts of Muslim women's

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<sup>4</sup> Taken from *tafsir ibn kathir*-this *tafsir* (the book on *Qur`ānic* interpretation) is famous in the Muslim world as well as among Muslims in the West.

bodies. In his interpretation of these verses, *Ibn Kathir* views the veil as a marker that differentiates believing women from the non believers.

As interpreted by *Ibn Kathir*, covering the private parts of women's bodies, popularly known as the *aurāt* in the Islamic literature, is a religious duty which is obligatory for all believing women. Because of this command, the veil in Islam becomes the specific marker of a Muslim woman as advocated by the Qur`ān. However, Zine (2006) suggests that there are many possible interpretations of these verses. According to some scholars, these verses do not indicate a particular sanction for un-veiled believing women (Zine, 2006). This is so because the verses do not explicitly mandate the need for believing women to cover their hair. They rather refer to the encouragement for believing women to draw a veil to cover their bosoms. Some other modern Muslim thinkers, such as Fatema Mernissi, and Leila Ahmed also do not see covering hair as an obligation. In fact, a progressive Indonesian Muslim scholar, Musda Mulia, sees the imposition and the formalization of the veil in the public sphere as not Islamic.

I have described *essentialized* understandings of Muslim identity as represented in the interpretation of the religious texts: *Qur`ānic* verses and the messages of the *Hadith*. Markers of Muslim identity as represented in these religious texts include praying five times daily, fasting, alms giving and also the pilgrimage to Mecca. Although religious texts provide essentialized understandings of Muslim identity, ways of being Muslim are also shaped by social and cultural factors, and thus there are multiple and different ways of being Muslim. In the following discussion, I examine the work of some Muslim scholars on ways of being Muslim.

### ***Social and cultural construction of Muslim identity***

Identity has been seen as a complicated subject to conceptualize. A prominent scholar, Stuart Hall sees identity as multiple and fragmented through discursive practices (Hall, 1992, 1996). Hall (1992), therefore, conceptualised it as not fixed and constantly changing, since the system of life is also in constant changes and in a reflexive form. Hall (1996) says:

.. . identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. .. Identity is always in the process of change and transformation (Hall, 1996, p. 4)

Hall (1990, 1992, 1996) indicates that traditionally, identity is seen a unified characteristic shared among people who have a common history. However, in the modern time, in which the life system has experienced transformation and shifted constantly, it is insufficient to talk about identity as a unified and fixed character of a particular group of people, as previously believed. Identity is then seen as a process of becoming rather than being as Hall (1996) argues. Since Identity is relational and not fixed, it is continuously shifting allowing to the changes in societies and locations.

In his seminal work: *Questions of Cultural Identity; Cultural Identity and Diaspora; and Cultural Identity in Question*. Hall (1992), for example provides three conceptualizations of identity: enlightenment subject, sociological subject, and post-modern subject. In the enlightenment subject, Hall (1992) sees identity as a fixed individualized identity, while the conception of identity in sociological subject is far different from the former concept of identity, the enlightenment, in which he argues that it is shaped in relation to others, and thus it is seen as relational. It is only through others; one can project oneself as Hall (1992) puts it. Therefore, for Hall, the process of identity construction is on-going, multiple, shifting and contextual (Hall, 1992, 1996). Identity is always shifting following the transformation of life systems Robins (1996) also notes similar idea, saying that “it is only through the other that we become aware of who we are and what we stand for?” (p. 79). Finally, in the post-modern subject, Hall sees identity as hybrid, fluid and multiple; it is far removed from the idea that identity is fixed and single.

In addition, Hall (1992, 1996); Grossberg (1996); and Robins (1996) argue that the construction of one’s identity is closely related to the politics of location, the politics of power and the politics of representation. These scholars suggest that identity is produced in a specific location. This suggests that the contexts where people reside will significantly shaped one’s identity.

Identity is also shaped through the politic of power. It means that those who are in power tend to identify others based on their rigid and unfair conception (Robins, 1996). In his work on Turkey’s efforts to gain acceptance to the European Union, Robins (1996), for example notes that while Turkey claims to have taken all necessary steps to gain acceptance, the western hegemony considers Turk as not part of the Europe, and in fact Turkey is seen as not appropriate to be part of the European Union. In this sense, Turkey’s identity as a nation has been seen to be inferior to that of the western people. Since identity is believed to be shaped in relation to the agencies taking place surrounding one’s life, the construction of identity is then related to the power of representation. People’s identity is “formed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural system which surrounds us” (Hall, 1992, p. 5), and thus identity shifts according to how the subject is addressed (Hall, 1992).

In this article, my main inquiry is to understand how Muslim identity is constructed. I explore how Australian-Indonesian young Muslims construct their ways of being Muslim across multiple settings. One of the questions that becomes a part of my inquiry is how these young Muslims perceive themselves in relation to Australia as a nation; do they see themselves as Australian Muslims or Muslims who happened to live in Australia? Therefore, I would discuss ways of being Muslim from multiple perspectives: as prescribed in the religious texts and as constructed through social and cultural contexts.

While acknowledging that the construction of Muslim identity is rooted in religious doctrine (Ramadan, 1999, 2004; Yasmeen, 2008; Zine, 2008), Muslim researchers and scholars also believe that Muslim identity is socially and culturally

constructed (Bayat & Herrera, 2010; Duderija, 2008; Imtoul, 2006; Mondal, 2008). Zine (2008), for example, acknowledges:

This malleability of Islamic identity is a function of the disjuncture between how Islamic identification is socially mapped, enacted, and lived, on the one hand, and the religious conception of Islamic identity rooted within doctrinal texts, on the other. These two aspects of Islamic identity – the social and the religious – generate a dichotomy between the socially defined, ascriptive characteristics of Islamic identity and those which are divinely ordained and inscribed within the praxis of religious tenets, such as the Five Pillars of Islam (Zine, 2008, p. 143).

As shown in the quote, Zine (2008) indicates that the term ‘Muslims’ refers in society to those who declare their faith to Islam as their religion, regardless of their level of practice of the Islamic rituals such as the *salāt* and the *sawm* (Zine, 1997). However, she also suggests that understanding Muslim identity cannot only be approached through discourses of religious texts but also needs to be based on the exploration of the political, social, cultural, and historical contexts, since they shape Muslim identity (Kabir, 2010). Therefore, interrelated discourses such as those of home environments, educational institutions, and broader community contexts shaping Muslim identity also need considered (Duderija, 2008, 2010a; Herrera & Bayat, 2010b) in studying Indonesian young Muslims’ ways of constructing their Muslim identity.

Given this fact, in this section, I describe social, political and cultural factors that are significant in shaping Muslim identity (Curtis, 2009; Duderija, 2010b; Esposito, 2010; Werbner, 2004). For example, the social contexts of particular countries where Islam has been rooted for centuries such as in some South-East Asian and Middle-Eastern countries shape certain ways of being Muslim. Muslims who live in a country such as Kazakhstan will view and practice the religion differently from those who live in Saudi Arabia, because Islam has yet to become the mainstream religion in the former country (Hassan, 2002, 2008). Likewise, different cultural values and politics within Muslim families, Muslim communities, and educational institutions influence young people’s ways of being Muslim. Furthermore, Muslims’ commitment to religious principles, such as donning the veil and adherence to the five-times-daily prayers, is also shaped by the policies and politics of the countries in which they live (Ali, 2005; Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Herrera & Bayat, 2010b; Mishra & Shirazi, 2010).

An additional factor that contributes to different ways of being Muslim is the fact that the religious texts are interpreted differently (Ramadan, 2004; Zine, 2008). Adis Duderija notes this issue in the following:

any attempt to understand the religious identity construction among Western-born generation of Muslims needs to take ... the structural-hermeneutical factor in religious identity construction. This phrase refers to a particular approach to the interpretation of primary source of the Islamic *Weltanschauung*, namely the Qur’an and the Sunnah. However, ... religious tradition and its source are subject to various interpretations based

upon certain methodological and epistemological assumptions (Duderija, 2008, p. 391).

As ways of understanding the messages of the religious texts are multiple, Muslims are divided into various types of Islamic groups. Some researchers, such as Yasmeen (2008), Peek (2005) and Saikal (2005) have come up with typologies of Muslims. Yasmeen (2008), in her study of examining the construction of Muslim identity in Australia, provides a useful categorization of different ways of being Muslim: practising and non-practising. The first category includes the 'orthodox' and the 'moderate/liberal' Muslims. The second group, the non-practising includes 'quiet observant' and 'exited' Muslims (Yasmeen, 2008, p. 30).

I acknowledge that ways of being Muslim cannot be understood as neat categories as ways of being are shaped by contexts and other social dimensions. However, Yasmeen's (2008) categories provide a useful framework of understanding Muslim identity. I refer to this categorization as a tool to examine my participants' ways of being Muslim. I seek to understand in this study whether young Muslims participating in this research see themselves within certain categories as suggested by Yasmeen (2008).

In addition, Yasmeen (2008) argues that these different categories emerges due to different perceptions of what counts in being good Muslims. For example, the orthodox Muslims believe in the assumption that to be a good Muslim, one has to follow all the teachings of Islam, such as the rituals, and also to comply with the dress code as enjoined by Islam, and they firmly believe that only through commitment to religious rituals, can they reach the level of religious piety (Yasmeen, 2008). In fact, they may view that some cultural practices in their host Western states, such as celebrating birthdays with a party as not Islamic, and thus discourage their children from participating in such parties, as we can see in the following narration of Yasmeen's (2008) participants:

He learnt about Islam and came to subscribe to orthodox understandings. He changed his dress code opting for what he identified as the *sunnah* (Prophetic tradition-[ways of life]. *sic*)...Her exposure to orthodox understandings has shaped her cultural practices. She does not send her children to birthday parties because, in her understanding, it is un-Islamic practice. She feels sad of not being able to slaughter sheep in the 'Islamic way' during Eid-ul-Adha (Yasmeen, 2008, pp. 32-33).

Although some Muslims do not call themselves orthodox, they believe that ways of being Muslim are based on fulfilling religious commitment, which is the *ibadāt*. For example, in the study of young British Muslims, Mondal (2008) found that some young Muslims represent their ways of being Muslim through observing religious rituals. They believe that the rituals are considered as the source for inner comfort, and being devoted in performing the rituals is the essence of being Muslim (Marranci, 2008). Muslims who hold such an idea, regard rituals as a way to keep the balance between their spiritual world and the worldly world.



This 'principled' group of Muslims takes Islam wholeheartedly and they do not believe there are any ways of being Muslim other than by observing the rituals (Mondal, 2008). They also believe that being devoted or religious does not mean they have to live a one-sided life, in which there is no room to enjoy their lives or claim their 'youthfulness' (Bayat & Herrera, 2010; Mondal, 2008). Muslims in this group also work to the best of their ability to imitate the attitudes and physical attributes of the Prophet Muhammad (PbuH) such as growing a beard and wearing the skullcap, which may be considered as a sign of radicalism in some parts of western societies (Mondal, 2008).

The moderate/liberal Muslims, on the other hand, do not take on all the attributes of Muslim identity as emphasized by the orthodox Muslims. They take not only Islam as their main marker of their identity but also other sources of identity markers. Mondal (2008) refers to this typology of Muslims as individualized Muslims. For them, Islam remains at the individual level. They believe that being good to others and helping out in the community are ways of being 'good' Muslims. One of Mondal's participants expresses his understanding of being a 'good' Muslim; Mondal (2008) notes:

being a good Muslim is, fundamentally, about being good to others ... For me, Islam is about just quietly getting on with it, trying to improve myself in my everyday life, in my dealings with Muslims, with non-Muslims, the world, everyone (Mondal, 2008, p. 39)

This quote reflects that for some Muslims being 'good' to others is the essence of a 'good' Muslim, and those who believe so will improve their ways of dealing with others.

The other study on Muslim youth in Nigeria carried out by Masquelier (2010) finds different ways of being Muslim, especially among young Muslims. He says that:

For the large majority of youth, however, "being Muslim" is not about engaging in pious acts (daily prayers, fasting and so on) so much as it is about seeing the world through the lens of Islam. This does not mean that these youths do not consider themselves Muslim (Masquelier, 2010, p. 225)

As shown in these studies above, ways of being Muslim are shaped by different ways of understanding the message of Islam. Some Muslims who see themselves as moderate Muslims relate being 'good' Muslim to being 'good' to others. Some other groups of Muslims may suggest that being Muslim is merely related to believing in Islam, rather than to ritual practices.

The two groups of Muslims, the orthodox and the moderate/liberal, tend to perceive themselves as more Islamic. For example, the orthodox group regards the other groups of Muslims as less Islamic, and at the same time, the moderate/liberal Muslims see the orthodox as narrow-minded and fundamental, overly focussed on the symbolism of the dress code and other aspects of physical appearance

considered to be the *sunnah* (ways of life) of the prophet (Mondal, 2008; Yasmeen, 2008).

The second category of Muslims emerging in Yasmeen's (2008) study are the non-practising Muslims, including the quiet observant, the secular and the exited Islam (p. 30). The emergence of this last Muslim category is shaped by many factors, one of which is a lack of exposure to the Islamic teachings or the Islamic environment. Most members of this group in Yasmeen's study stated that their reason for exiting Islam was their disappointment with the reality of their religion. For example, they perceived that believing in a certain religion such as Islam required them to develop their sense of hatred toward other religions.

As noted earlier, these categories, however, remain not fixed; they are constantly and continually shifting (Mondal, 2008). Some Muslims may regard themselves as orthodox at one time, and then shift to the other end of the spectrum. This shift could occur due to their exposure to the other environments or their other circles of friends. In fact, some Muslims may take both the orthodox and the moderate ways of being Muslim at the one time. For example, some Muslim women may believe in the obligation of putting on the veil and strictly follow the Islamic principles, but at the same time, they may consider that participating in the western environment is permissible in the Islamic teaching.

Other typologies of Muslim identity have been proposed. In a study of young American Muslim identity, Peek (2005) categorizes Muslim identity into three typological groupings: the first, *ascribed* religious identity, the second, *chosen* religious identity and the third typology, *declared* religious identity. Some Muslim youth in Peek's study express their ascribed religious identity; children who were born and raised in a Muslim family will be urged to take for granted that Islam should figure prominently in their identity. At such a young age, these Muslim children lack the ability to reflect on such an ascribed identity. However, depending on their level of maturity, Muslim youth possess the capabilities to choose good or bad things for themselves.

This reflexivity on religious identity oftentimes occurs during their college year. At this stage, Muslim youth consider either to choose Islam as their identity or reject it. This kind of religious identity is described as *chosen* religious identity. The third religious identity as discussed in Peek's article is *declared* religious identity. It is an identity which is strongly declared by Muslims. Post 9/11 Muslim Americans have been placed under public suspicion and national and international spotlights. These treatments have forced Muslims to adhere more closely to their religion and declare Islam as their identity. In fact, under such surveillance, some Muslims are more determined to assert their *Muslimness* instead of denying it. In addition, Muslims have begun to return to their Islamic teachings through improving their knowledge on Islam as well as practising its teachings. The rapid growth of knowledge on Islam is needed to help combat suspicion against Islam and to respond to queries about it.

In a study of Muslims' attitudes, Saikal (2005) suggests four attitudes of Muslims in response to their issues in the West, especially in the aftermath of the event of 9/11. Saikal (2005) dubs the first attitudinal grouping of Muslims *moderate Islamists*. These Muslims are also referred to as secularist and liberalist. Avoiding violence in facing and solving the problems of the Islamic world is the main platform of this Muslim group. Those who fall into this group stand in between love and dislike of the Western community. On the one hand, they keenly accept Western education; on the other, they are critical of the 'unfair' treatment of Muslim communities by the West. The second attitudinal group is that of the *radical Islamist*. Unlike the former group of Islamists, this group is more assertive in expressing their identity. It is also puritanical in social and political behaviour. The radical Islamist neither totally rejects nor fully observes modernity; instead such Muslims are cautious in accepting modernity. In contrast to the moderate Islamist, the radical Islamist assumes the western world, especially the US and the UK, to be responsible for problems facing the wider Muslim community today, and thus this group considers violence as legitimate under certain circumstances.

The last two groups of Muslims in Saikal's (2005) study is the *neo-fundamentalist* and *societal Islam*. The former adheres to a strict and literal interpretation of the teachings of Islam. This group holds a particular school of thought and is more puritanical and assertive than the radical Islamists. This group, however, possesses low levels of Islamic knowledge and only holds a very basic understanding of Islamic principles. The latter attitudinal group, societal Islam, is seen as belonging to ordinary Muslims who may be political or apolitical. The societal Muslims hold very little understanding of Islamic teachings. Therefore, this group of Muslims may become radical and fundamental in their thought on Islamic principles.

The studies by Yasmeen (2008), Peek (2005), and Saikal (2005) have provided useful typologies of different ways of being Muslim. Although my participants may represent their ways of being Muslim differently again, these categorizations from Yasmeen (2008), Peek (2005), and Saikal (2005) provide a helpful framework for my efforts to understand my participants' ways of being Muslim.

In addition, ways of being Muslim are also influenced by Muslims' ethnic cultures. Muslim scholars and sociologists such as Bayat and Herrera (2010), Mondal (2008), Ramadan (2004), Yasmeen (2008) and Zine (2008) argue that as a result of the intersection between cultural and Islamic values, Islam is understood differently by different Muslim communities. These different ways of understanding Islam also shape their ways of engagement within the mainstream societies (Duderija, 2008).

Due to the intersection of religious and ethnic values, it is difficult for most Muslims, whether they live in Muslim minority or majority countries, to see clear distinctions between cultural values and religious teaching (Ramadan, 2004). This difficulty leads to the complexities in understanding the religion, especially for Western-born Muslim youth. Ramadan (2004) argues that Muslims living in non-

Muslim western societies embrace ethno-religious identity located at the intersection of Islamic and ethnic values. Ramadan argues:

The Muslim women and men who emigrated from, for example, Pakistan, Algeria, Morocco, Turkey or Guyana brought with them not only the memory of the universal principles of Islam but also, quite naturally, the way of life they followed in those countries. Moreover, to remain faithful to Islam meant, in the minds of first-generation immigrants, to perpetuate the customs of their countries of origin (Ramadan, 2004, p. 215)

As they tend to adopt the customs of their home in their host countries, the first generation Muslim immigrants perceive themselves (and are perceived) as Pakistani-Muslims, Bangladeshi-Muslims or Iranian-Muslims in the US or in Europe (Ramadan, 2004). When the younger generations do not see themselves as parts of those ethnicities (i. e. Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Iranian) and do not take on their ethnic cultural practices, they seemed to be viewed as losing their religious identity (Ramadan, 2004). In my study, I am interested in understanding how Indonesian Muslim parents perceive the identity of their children. Therefore, in my effort to understand the Indonesian family dynamics, I examine whether Indonesian Muslim parents relate the embracing (or not) of ethnic cultures with their children's sense of Muslim identity.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that, although Islamic and cultural values co-exist, Ramadan (2004) contends that Islam is not a culture; rather, it is a religion with *Tawhid* (the belief in the oneness of God) as its central principle (Marranci, 2008). Therefore, he argues, Islam needs to be detached from the Muslims' ethnic cultures. Ramadan (2004) suggests that many second generation Muslims begin to realize the need to distance themselves from ethnic culture. He says:

Many young Muslims by studying their religion, claim total allegiance to Islam while distancing themselves from their culture of origin. At the same time, more and more converts to Islam, who find themselves having to choose between "becoming" Pakistani or "becoming" Arab rather than Muslim, have slowly begun to be aware of this mistake: so there is a clear difference between Islam and the culture of origin! (Ramadan, 2004, p. 215)

Ramadan (2004) believes when Islam is detached from certain ethnic cultural values, it can be transferred to any part of the world; one can be a Muslim in Australia, the USA, the UK, European countries, and in other Muslim minority countries. When Muslims reside in these non-Muslim countries they could see themselves as Australian, American or European Muslims instead of addressing themselves as Muslims living in Australia and so forth. With this claim, Ramadan invites Muslim immigrants to see themselves as an integral part of those western states (Ramadan, 2004).

This article has elaborated how Muslims' ways of engaging in the mainstream society are different. Sirin and Fine (2008) found that young Muslims integrate

well with the mainstream society. They found that young American Muslims engage in multiple-shifting identity, referring to their many highly compatible identities. Muslim youth in their study are found to hold on to both identities: the Muslim and American identities. The two identities are not 'mutually exclusive'; instead they are equally important for these Muslim youth. This means that the possession of one identity does not necessarily mean the rejection of the other. Basit (2009) also provides a similar argument that the young Muslims in her study hold on to both British and Muslim identities which are found compatible, in that being a young Briton does not mean rejecting a Muslim identity.

However, the Muslim youth seem to realize that they encounter multiple challenges within their Muslim inner circle as well as from mainstream people in negotiating both markers of identity (Sirin & Fine, 2008). In spite of the tremendous challenges experienced by Muslims, especially Muslim youth in the USA, these do not result in the rejection of their Muslim or American identities (Sirin & Fine, 2008). This present study explores how young Indonesian Muslims engage in the Australian social contexts and how their family and the *ummah* dynamics play a part in their ways of constructing their Muslim identity.

## CONCLUSION

The conceptions of Muslim identity as described in this article indicate that Muslim identity is constructed through the interplay of various discourses: religious texts; the interpretations of the texts and Islamic traditions by religious clerics and members of the *ummah*; Muslims' ethnic cultures, and social, cultural, economical and political issues in the home and the host countries. Because of these various factors shaping Muslim identity formation, ways of being Muslim are also multiple, shifting and contextual. There are different ways in which Muslims negotiate the various markers of Islamic religious texts and markers of Muslim identity in different contexts. Some are devoted Muslims and hold on to particular 'scriptural hermeneutics' (Duderija, 2008, p. 390), and see the only way of being Muslim as through practising the Islamic rituals, while others tend to follow the ideas prescribed by the liberal or moderate Muslims who value different and multiple ways of being Muslim. Some Muslims have a strong attachment to both their ethnicity and Islamic religious identity. There are also some migrant Muslims who take on the cultures of their host country in the process of negotiating their Islamic identity.

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