

IN WHAT WAYS DO FEMINIST,
ISLAMIC, AND DEVELOPMENT
DISCOURSES COMPETE,
CONVERGE, AND CONFLICT IN
CONTEMPORARY
CONSTRUCTIONS OF GENDER
AND GENDER JUSTICE?

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ABSTRACT

TITLE

IN WHAT WAYS DO FEMINIST, ISLAMIC, AND DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSES COMPETE, CONVERGE, AND CONFLICT IN CONTEMPORARY CONSTRUCTIONS OF GENDER AND GENDER JUSTICE?

ABSTRACT:

This thesis examines how an Islamic/Muslim Faith-Based Organisation in the UK (namely Islamic Relief) entered into the conversation on contemporary constructions of gender and gender justice during the ‘turn to religion’ period within International Development.

Methodologically, I employed a case study approach, primarily derived from interview data and analysis of Islamic Relief’s *Gender Justice Policy*. The use of semi-structured interviews ensured I could prioritise the voices of the agentic experiences of a small group of policy-level level faith actors/religious subjects. The research centred on participants, recalling their lived experiences, as well as the organisational journey to develop a *Gender Justice Policy* through the mobilisation and operationalisation of religious knowledge to formally introduce gender into their organisational context.

Theoretically, I undertook a magpie approach drawing on a range of critical theories and concepts and thinkers, to assemble a set of thinking tools through which to undertake an ascending analysis of power, as advocated by Michel Foucault. First, I drew on Foucault, particularly his understanding of the workings of power from below. Second, Said’s Orientalism discourse was

explored throughout the thesis. And Third, I threaded Spivak's epistemic violence, Butler's queer theorisation and challenge to gender binaries, and Hemmings's feminist storytelling to uncover the microscale mechanisms that played out in this case.

I traced how exogenous and endogenous discourses from within the Islamic, feminist, and development traditions often repeated, reproduced, and re-orientalised the constructions of gender and gender justice praxis and how these discourses surfaced and resurfaced within this case.

In focusing on the micro-level of analysis of (power) and the experiences within one case, this thesis offers a rich and detailed examination of relations of power/knowledge and resistance. In exploring the agentic experiences of faith actors/religious subjects, I suggest that during the turn to religion era, the mechanism of Orientalist knowledge production on the 'Other' had been transferred to faith actors in development, something I conceptualise as reorientalism. In showing how competing, converging, and conflicting discourses played out in this case I argue that these micro-mechanisms interplay with macro and global mechanisms of 'technologies of domination' to suggest that orientalism remains unfinished within International Development.

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In the game of chess, there is a term known as escorting the pawn. It is the act of moving a weaker piece: the pawn, across the board to the opposite side wherein the pawn can become a stronger chess woman (a queen). The other pieces who support this process are often stronger chessmen/women who protect the pawn along the journey. The list of those who have supported this pawn across to the opposite side of the board, in this game of chess, is many.

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PREFACE

Although my mother started this PhD journey with me, her journey ended before I could complete my research and thesis. It was a privilege and a trauma to take care of her in the last years of her battle with cancer. Putting the project on hold meant I could be wholeheartedly with her but her absence since and more so now as I come toward the end of the project continues to cut through me. My Amma firmly believed that no one could take away your knowledge and with her backing, she enabled me to delve deeper and indulge in my love of knowledge. It is with immense sorrow that I will not share this with her.

My Abba, who left us too soon, but who kept and warmed my heart, and who vigorously encouraged me to change the script on what a girl could do and made me chase dreams that were bigger than my eyes could hold...it is in the 25th anniversary of his passing that I will complete this PhD. making me the first female and only person in our families history to undertake/complete a PhD.

It is in the meaning of our family name 'Jabbar', which comes from the Arabic, and is one of the 99 names of God, that I am reminded that the One who soothes and leads to the heart may one day restore that which has broken into pieces... It is in their memory I dedicate my PhD.

1. INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Within the field of development studies and international development policy and practice, the emergence of the sub-field of religion and development (hereafter RaD), was a deliberate and significant shift. This shift and scholarly engagement with religion within international development, after decades of neglect, re-centred religion within international development studies and development policy (Deneulin and Rakodi 2011, Bompani 2019). Within international development studies, this period has been termed the 'turn to religion' era (Tomalin 2020)

Barbara Bompani (2019:1), notes that this focus on religion was propelled by policy demands and a need for intellectual engagement within non-academic circles, especially in the wake of 9/11. Consequently, 9/11 marked a crucial inflection point, compelling various disciplines, including international development, to (re)incorporate religion(s) into social and political analysis to address contemporary global challenges (Tadros 2011, Bompani 2019).

This renewed focus on religion, driven by policy demands for intellectual engagement, within non-academic circles post-9/11, saw the establishment of centres for the study of religion and development (Bompani 2019), including the Birmingham-based RaD Consortium, funded by the UK's Department for International Development (2005-2010), and Berkley's 'Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs' at Georgetown University, formed within the Office of the US President in 2006 (Bompani 2019:1).

These centres, along with funding agencies (both national e.g. DFID, DANIDA and multi-national e.g. World Bank and UN agencies) became hubs for producing knowledge on religion and development. Subsequently, this period saw an increase in the volume of published materials within development studies (Deneulin and Rakodi 2011, Bompani 2019). Alongside this expansion in knowledge generation on the subject and treatment of religion in development, funding agencies (national and multi-nationals) formed partnerships with faith communities and Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs).

FBOs, which are organisations rooted in religious beliefs, increasingly came into the academic spotlight. International and national donors (national and multi-national funding agencies) seized on the possibility of developing partnerships with FBOs, who up until this point were marginal actors in the field of international development. The rationale behind this for donor agencies was that faith communities and FBOs would make effective partners in achieving global development goals. This was because FBOs were viewed as having unique advantages over their secular counterparts and shared similar values around poverty alleviation (Deneulin and Rakodi 2011, Bompani 2019).

Shifting scripts: from development secular to sacred scripts

This flux of interest and newly generated knowledge was accompanied by funding flowing towards FBOs. For example, FBOs in the UK were viewed as potential brokers, who could assist in the process of shifting development scripts from secular to sacred and bridging the divide between FBOs, faith communities, and faith actors in the Global South in terms of mainstream

development agendas (Tomalin 2020). Some FBOs in the Global North were then required to function and speak the jargon of mainstream development organisations (Bompani 2019). Thus, religion having once been considered a hindrance was now viewed as potentially helpful to the goals of development and entered into the contemporary social and political discourses within international development policy, practice, and studies.

How this chapter is organised

It is within the context of the turn to religion era and the scholarly literature within the subfield of religion and development that this research study was born. In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I will briefly explore the historical context, key phases, and evolving methodologies that have shaped the sub-field of RaD in contemporary development studies, to situate where this study enters and departs from existing development studies. Then, I will highlight how this study intends to contribute to the turn to religion scholarly conversations within international development discourses. Next, I will outline the scope and focus of the study, including details of the case study organisation, and provide definitions of the key concepts that will be used throughout the thesis. Finally, I will outline the chapters in the thesis, emphasising the methodology, theoretical influences, and the key contributions that this study is making to this field.

THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH THIS STUDY WAS SITUATED

The early literature within the nascent sub-field of religion and development has had two distinct phases: the emergence of the field (2000 to 2010) and its

establishment (2011 to 2018) (Bompani 2019). As already discussed above, the post-9/11 period was a watershed moment in which religion could no longer be excluded from the conversation and analysis of social, political, and global discourses in the field of international development and international relations.

The Development Context Which Shaped and Influenced This Study

This research project was originally situated within the continuously evolving conversation on re-centring religion within academic scholarship/disciplines and non-academic domains in international development and international relations during the turn to religion era. The research project started in 2012 coinciding with the transition period of the RaD scholarship, and the movement from the emergence to the establishment phase. Likewise, the knowledge-building and sharing phase of the RaD consortium, housed at the University of Birmingham within the International Development Department (IDD), was also coming towards the end of its programme. Importantly, this confluence of circumstances intersected with my time as a master's student at IDD.

That is to say, this period introduced me to cutting-edge research and shifting discourses in international development and the subfield of religion and development. Moreover, offered new scholarship(s), new practices, and exposure to new development actors, for example, faith actors within international development, like Islamic Relief (the case study organisation within this research project). This placed me in a unique situation to explore this subfield from within the intersection of theory building and praxis.

The 'Turn to Religion' Post-9/11

The historical context of centuries of distrust from the development and policy sectors, alongside, core assumptions within international development practice and policies, had, for example, placed religion as problematic or a constraint to the aims of development (Deneulin and Rakodi 2011).

Religion, was, therefore, viewed as an impediment to the modernisation process of societies (Deneulin and Rakodi 2011). However, the events of 9/11 became a watershed moment, leading to the proliferation of academic and non-academic literature within development studies and international development (Bompani 2019). During the emergence phase, most of the scholarship was concerned with laying out critiques by carving a space within the development studies literature for the inclusion of religion, which had historically been excluded. Thus, the key critiques centred on how development thinking had historically followed a European and North American secular model (Rakodi and Deneulin, 2011). The key critique was that Western, neoliberal biases had promoted an approach which discarded religion and applied ethnocentric concepts globally (Clarke, Jennings et al. 2007, Clarke 2008, De Cordier 2009)

Much of the literature during this early period of emergence held the underlying message that religion mattered (Clarke 2006, Bompani 2019). Furthermore, during this phase, there were calls for a new academic methodology and approach to development which would take religion seriously (Bompani 2019). The question of whether religion was a help or hindrance to development efforts was often answered during this period and (religion) was presented as a potential resource, depending on the context (Hopkins and Patel 2006,

Josephine Para-Mallam 2006, Lunn 2009). However, religion was viewed instrumentally, as a resource, to be harnessed in the delivery of development goals (Bompani 2019).

Bompani (2019), in tracing the scholarship during the establishment phase, noted two shifts within the literature. The first was a focus towards individual agency and faith experience over institutional partnerships (Balchin 2011, Jones and Petersen 2011). The second is to understand the complexities and workings of religion in varied, multiple, contexts. Including interpretive indigenous tools to religion, for example, the incorporation of theology in policy-making (Clarke 2006, Bompani 2019). The establishment years saw a move towards understanding how religion played a part in people's identities and everyday lives, both collectively and individually (Bompani 2019). For example, the scholarship started to offer explanations that defined religion as embodied (Deneulin and Bano, 2009). It looked to situate religion with its interaction with other areas of life, including gender (Bompani 2019).

Methodological questions and interdisciplinary approaches

Bompani (2019) claims that the answer to the earlier 2006-10 demands for a new methodology emerged in 2011-17. One such suggestion put forward at this time was to employ feminist approaches. Feminist approaches highlighted the nexus of interconnected factors including gender, religion, and development. Drawing attention to the multidimensional nature of this field led to calls for an interdisciplinary methodology. For example, Wendy Mee (2016) called for an account of the voices of recipients of aid to be included. Additionally, Mee (2016) suggested that there were many shared conceptual problems in the

fields of Gender and Development and Religion and Development namely categorisation, representation, and identification. Bompani (2019), in response to these common methodological challenges and possible solutions for addressing these issues connected to religion and gender within development, called for new literature to explore this further.

Reflexivity and power dynamics in development

During the establishment phase, calls for greater reflexivity in development identified the relatively under-established significance of this theme (Bompani 2019). As part of this reflexive turn in development scholarship, attention to the dynamics of power intrinsic to aid relationships began to highlight the legacies of mission, secularisation, and especially colonialism (Bompani 2019).

Many authors argued for development agents to be conscious of the ethics of power in their work (Bompani 2019). Moreover, some scholars sought to expand the current literature to include more 'uncomfortable subject matters' pressing for religious development actors to take a more explicit, activist stance (Connor 2011).

Contemporary scholarship on the Turn to Religion which has shaped and influenced this study

FBOs provided valuable insight into the intersection between RaD and international development practice. During the establishment phase, critiques claimed that the previous scholarship concentrated on categorising and homogenising FBOs (Deneulin and Rakodi 2011, Balchin 2011, Tomalin 2012, Mee 2016). To correct the pre-2011 narrower focus, development scholars and practitioners began to appreciate the vast diversity in religious organisations

and faith communities. Calling for recognition of the variety and complexity of these organisations, some authors consequently called for greater contextualised and empirical research on FBOs (Kirmani and Zaidi 2010, Jennings 2013, Tomalin 2016).

More recent nuanced, empirical, and theoretical research on the turn to religion (Khalaf-Elledge 2020, Tomalin 2020, Khalaf-Elledge 2021, Le Roux 2021, Wilkinson, Logo et al. 2022), has drawn attention to how during the early period of the turn to religion within international development, and despite initial debates and research within RaD, there remained a dearth of religious literacy within donor agencies; aid/funding recipients (FBOs); and local faith actors (LFA) (Khalaf-Elledge 2020).

Moreover, this new scholarship has suggested that donor practitioners' engagement (with Western-based development organisations) with religion in this period led to the outsourcing of religious literacy to faith actors within newly formed partnerships, for example with FBOs and some LFA's (Khalaf-Elledge 2020, Wilkinson, Logo et al. 2022).

However, this (religious) knowledge building (through the mechanism of religious literacy) was not part of a two-way knowledge exchange (Le Roux 2021) and was often influenced by development actors' neo-colonial and Orientalising views of religion (Khalaf-Elledge 2020) within a never-truly secular aid business (Wilkinson, Logo et al 2022).

Furthermore, these studies provided a more nuanced reading of the different roles that faith actors undertook in shaping the boundaries between religious

and secular spaces in aid. These studies observed that in the engagement of faith actors within the business of aid, faith actors who held a stronger grasp of the development language and downplayed their faith identities became more likely to form partnerships than faith actors who may have overt expressions of faith identity and did not co-opt a development lexicon (Tomalin 2020, Wilkinson, Logo et al. 2022).

Subsequently, these more nuanced studies have prompted calls for more research on a) faith actor-orientated approaches to the turn to religion, and b) to explore the intersection of the subfield of gender and development (GAD) within RaD. It is within this scholarship that this study is closely situated.

A Call for Faith Actor-Orientated Approaches to the Turn to Religion Era

Indeed, in the initial period of this research project, faith actor-orientated approaches and the nexus between religion-gender-development remained understudied. Nevertheless, this study not only sits within this newer scholarship but also aims to build and extend on this. Thus, in focusing on Muslim faith actors' experiences of the turn to religion, the study offers a view from below, from the margins to the centre of development, of the turn to religion era within development. By specifically focusing on Muslim faith actors' experiences, in the UK, the study traces how:

- The mechanisms of knowledge building through the religious literacy project (referred to by the faith actors within the case study as the 'faith literacy' project) saw the faith actors mobilise religious knowledge to develop faith literacy on gender and development to inform and produce

a gender justice policy. I explore how, through the mechanism of the faith literacy project, faith actors become 'native informants' (a person who gives 'inside' information to the colonial subject that may confirm a colonial view of the world thereby authenticating existing beliefs and not offering a challenge to essentialized generalisations (Spivak 1999))

- The complexities, nuances, and methodological challenges of doing research on Muslim faith actors, during the turn to religion and post 9/11 period, who were working in the intersection of multiple (historical) discourses within the subfields of gender and development and religion and development.
- (How) Orientalism surfaced, resurfaced, and re-orientalised the faith actors in development during the turn to religion period.

It should be noted that this research project, during this early iteration, was focused on Muslim faith actors within a Muslim faith-based international development organisation in the UK. This group of actors within development were, and is still, an under-studied group within the sub-field of development studies and gender and development studies as collaborative knowledge producers. In this way, this study contributes to addressing this gap in the literature. Not only that, but the Muslim faith actors were attempting to formally introduce gender into all levels of their organisational structure and operations, through theory, policy, and practice from within an Islamic framework. In this context, the faith actors in this case would be taking on uncomfortable matters around gender and religion, and an explicit, activist stance on gender matters.

Moreover, the faith actors would be undertaking gender mainstreaming during the turn to religion era (this, at the time of the research project, had never been done).

Gender Mainstreaming during the Turn to Religion era

At the beginning of this research project, the literature and practice of gender mainstreaming (defined by the UN Economic and Social Council as the integration of a gender equality perspective at all stages and levels of policy, programmes and projects for both women and men) had been a secular enterprise. In this context, a religious/faith-based framework to gender mainstreaming was a) unprecedented within Islamic/Muslim FBOs in the UK, and b) within the subfield of gender and development and more broadly in the debates on gender mainstreaming.

In this way, this research project was a significant step towards building inclusive and collaborative knowledge on diasporic Muslim faith actors who were deliberately shifting and re-centring religion and gender (and development) discourses within the context of the UK in a post-9/11 era.

In particular, in the wake of 9/11, a religious framework for gender mainstreaming might be viewed as part of an inclusive approach to development. First from the point of view of FBOs, and second, in terms of the global shift within the international development agenda to incorporate religion as an inclusive approach to development goals, thereby emphasising the shift and re-centring of religion in development practice.

Moreover, FBOs, like Islamic Relief, were attempting to negotiate entry into the centre of international development from the margins, whilst negotiating dominant secular development discourses around gender and development.

For FBOs, like Islamic Relief, located in the UK (the Global North) but operating within the Global South, working with dominant discourses on gender and development become contested and complicated sites to navigate and negotiate. Subsequently, this highlights the contested terrain that the faith actors at Islamic Relief would be navigating. The secular dimension on the one hand, and on the other, secular feminist discourses that had influenced the field of gender inclusion in development, along with dominant concepts such as gender equality, not only complicate but also become sites of resistance and agency.

These sites of power and resistance inspired research questions around how these different discourses would compete and come into conflict, as well as explore how they might possibly converge. I apply this approach to explore the following three research questions:

- How have Muslim UK development faith actors operationalised religious knowledge for gender/gender justice?
- What is the relationship between the operationalisation of this religious knowledge and (re)orientalism?
- In what ways have debates between feminism and Islam surfaced, resurfaced, and been (temporarily) reconciled?

Exploring Faith Actor-Orientated Approaches to the Turn to Religion Era

The establishment phase (within RaD) was a period marked by a shift towards participatory models of empirical research that sought to integrate marginal actors and indigenous voices. One such call came from Emma Tomalin (2020), who noted that faith development actor-orientated approaches to the turn to religion era had been under-represented in the literature.

In answering this call, this research project sought to understand the lived experiences of a small group of Muslim faith actors within an international development organisation in the UK, namely Islamic Relief. The faith actors were engaged with navigating and negotiating the formal introduction of gender (both at a policies and programme level and informal gender work) and produced a gender justice policy within the changing political, social, and development context of the post-9/11 era. The case study thereby offers insight into how shifting development discourses were played out through the experiences of marginal faith actors during this period and thereby offers a perspective from below. This perspective has remained under-researched within the RaD literature. This thereby seeks to fill a gap in knowledge about a specific population whose voices have been marginalised.

Faith Actors' Approaches to Mobilising (religious) Knowledge during the Turn to Religion Era

This research project, therefore, started with the aim of understanding how faith actors within FBOs, in the UK, mobilised knowledge to formally work within the intersections of religion, gender, and development. I wanted to understand where feminist, Islamic, and development discourses competed, converged,

and came into conflict, when Muslim faith actors sought to navigate contemporary constructions of gender and gender justice in the UK.

Furthermore, I was keen to explore how faith actors, who occupied marginal positions in mainstream discourses within international development and international relations came to resist or mimic dominant discourses. Moreover, as these faith actors were practising religion in diaspora, they would need to negotiate with historical issues of power relations, representations, and categorisation. That is to say, contemporary constructions of gender and gender justice are part of ‘a history of the present’ (Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007:32)

THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY AND KEY CONCEPTS USED WITHIN THE THESIS

This research study explores the dynamics of faith actor-oriented approaches to the turn to religion within the post-9/11 geopolitical landscape, with a specific focus on the construction of gender and gender justice by Muslim faith actors. The study examines how a particular group of Muslim faith actors, operating within a Western-based Muslim Faith-Based Organisation (FBO) in the UK—specifically, Islamic Relief—mobilised religious knowledge to craft contemporary understandings and policies around gender justice.

Employing a case study methodology, the research explores the processes through which these actors negotiated the intersections of faith, gender, and development in a context shaped by both global and local pressures. The study draws on semi-structured interviews conducted with seven senior policy-level

Muslim faith actors who were directly involved in Islamic Relief's faith literacy project and the subsequent development of a Gender Justice Policy.

By focusing on Islamic Relief as a case study, this thesis not only contributes to an understanding of how faith actors within a prominent Muslim FBO respond to and shape gender discourse but also offers insights into the broader implications of these processes for the RaD and GAD sub-field.

The theoretical framework guiding this study employed Edward Said's (1978) concept of Orientalism and Lisa Lau's notion of Re-Orientalism (Lau 2009, Lau and Mendes 2011, Juluri 2013), providing a critical lens to analyse how Orientalist frameworks may persist or resurface within contemporary development practices. These theories offer an understanding of how Muslim faith actors both challenge and inadvertently reproduce orientalist narratives as they navigate the complex terrain of gender and development in a post-9/11 world. Within this thesis, I work with many key concepts. In the next section, I define and explain how I will work with these concepts in the thesis.

Orientalism

I use the term 'Orientalism' in two ways in this thesis. The first draws broadly on Said's (1978) conceptualisation of 'Orientalism' which I understand as the historical way European colonisers (the British and the French in the 19th and 20th centuries) constructed the East. The Orient (the Middle East/Islamic/Muslim World) was conceptualised as dangerous, exotic, exciting, and strange, which required taming and silencing (Wisker 2006:201). Additionally, the process of othering is then a key component of the mechanism through which the East is constructed as inferior while simultaneously constructing the West as superior.

For Said, Orientalism was a Western fantasy that was constructed through a set of values and a Western vision that was imposed on Eastern peoples that are built on binary divisions between the West and the East, within a hierarchical relationship (Wisker 2006:202-203).

The second way in which I use the term, which I will discuss in detail in chapter four, is that I draw on Said's (1978) definitions of Orientalism, as a typology to argue that the concept of the 'new Orientalist' can be applied to this case. In that, the Muslim faith actors might be considered the new Orientalists within international development, who employ the mechanisms of Orientalism, which I argue is a form of re-Orientalism (Lau 2009).

The Woman Question and Orientalism

The 'woman question' generally refers to discourses and debates surrounding roles, rights, and the status of women in society. The term gained prominence in Europe and North America in the 19th and 20th centuries, amidst significant social, political, and economic changes, for example, the Industrial Revolution in Britain. Moreover, in the Victorian era, debates on the status of and the role women ought to play in English society placed women either in the private sphere and the domestic realm as wife and mother, or in the public sphere calling for the need for women to have greater opportunities in educational, economic, and political realms (Caine 1993, Crosby 2012).

It should be noted that the 'woman question' on the one hand was, as Christina Crosby (2012) articulates, a Victorian male preoccupation with 'women' and their 'otherness' including their differences from men. On the other hand, the Victorian women's movement and the role and status of women were also the

subjects of women by women, even so, this did not mean there was consensus within feminist debates (Caine 1982, Caine 1993).

Moreover, during this period, the 'woman question' was not solely confined to debates within Europe and North America. Additionally, the status of women within non-European societies was also the subject and treatment of European writers, travellers, and colonial administrators (Said 1978, Ahmed 1992, Yegenoglu 1998, Chari 2001).

More specifically, within the context of non-European societies, the representation of women in the Orient and the treatment of the 'woman question' by European writers (whether literary or anthropological), is suggested to have been constructed based on the Oriental woman, within the Orient, as veiled, sexualised, and lacking both agency and voice (Ahmed 1992, Chari 2001, Haider 2023). Consequently, this (re)presentation of the epistemological veiled woman of the Orient, as opposed to what Said (1978) distinguished from the 'real' Orient (Yegenoglu 1998:10), has become a pernicious (post) colonial fantasy. It is one in which, the veiled women of the Orient are constructed by their 'otherness' and their differences.

The fascination with the veiled woman of the Orient has continued throughout contemporary periods to make, unmake, and remake the discourses and debates on the 'woman question' both in the context of women in the Orient (now more generally referred to as the East or the Muslim World) and concerning women who live in non-Muslim majority societies, but who may have attachments to the real Orient, namely the veiled Muslim woman in the (West)

Global North (Mernissi 1987, Mernissi 1991, Hoodfar 1992, Bullock 2002, Cooke 2002, Cooke 2007, Ahmed 2011, Seddiki 2022).

Additionally, the 'woman question' has not been confined to European discourses and debates on the Orient. Within Muslim-majority societies, the 'woman question' has equally been part of significant (and at times, turbulent) periods of social, economic, and political changes including during pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods of upheaval and change (Ahmed 1992, Yegenoglu 1998, Mir-Hosseini 2002, Shepherd 2006, Mubarak 2022).

Tracing the Genealogy of the Woman Question – Evolution and Persistent Orientalist Narratives

Long before the Orientalist gaze, the 'woman question' had been part of the Islamic tradition. Similar to Victorian male preoccupation with women, Muslim scholars, within the Islamic tradition, in the context of Muslim-majority societies, produced knowledge on the role and status of women within Islam (Mernissi 1991, Barlas 2002). Equally, (Muslim secular and/or Islamic) feminism has offered counter-narratives historically and within contemporary debates (Ahmed 1992, Afsaruddin and Badran 1999, Ahmed-Ghosh 2013, Sayeed 2013, Anwar 2018), thereby reflecting the relevance of the 'woman question' in both the public and academic spheres.

In chapters two (specifically) and three, I will undertake a deeper discussion of the 'woman question' to trace the pernicious and persistent ways in which the Orientalist discourse on the 'woman question' continues to shape and reshape discourses and debates on the role and status of women both within the context

of Muslim-majority societies and how these discourses and debates surface and resurface within the epistemological Orient. In tracing the genealogy of the discourses and debates on the 'woman question' through exploration across different historical periods and cultural contexts, I look to emphasise the evolution and continuity of the debates and discourses surrounding (Muslim) women's roles, rights, and status to show how the orientalist discourse not only has continued but how it (re)surfaces within this case study. Moreover, I suggest that this resurfacing of the Orientalist discourse has evolved and can be understood as re-Orientalism, which I will explore within the empirical chapters (Chapters Six and Seven).

There is little doubt that Said's (1978) contribution through *Orientalism* has profoundly influenced our understanding of critical postcolonial theories/theories, cultural representations, and resistance. But critics, including Gayatri Spivak (Spivak 1988, Spivak 1999) and Meyda Yegenoglu (1998), have challenged the gender and sexuality blindness in Said's readings of *Orientalism*. Both, therefore, offer feminist readings by way of addressing the gap.

Significantly, they note that discussions of gender categories of *Orientalism* require a more complicated analysis, a reformulation of the nature of Orientalist discourse itself (Yegenoglu 1998:1).

This case study offers a reading of *Orientalism* through gender to reveal and complicate the nature of Orientalist discourse, and how otherness is simultaneously achieved through gender and cultural differences within contemporary constructions of gender; in particular, when those who are undertaking this construction are themselves simultaneously Orientalised and

may be viewed as Westernised. Another way to put this is that the faith actors, in this case, may simultaneously be (re)Orientalising and (re)Orientalised.

The Muslim Question

Since the events of 9/11, the question of whether Muslims and Islam belong in the West has led to 'The Muslim Question' (Mansouri, Lobo et al. 2015). In much the same way Marx's essay 'On the Jewish Question' marked Jews as the site where theology and citizenship met (Norton 2010). Consequently, the Muslim question is the site where Muslims, theology, citizenship/belonging are problematised as a) a clash between the East and West (Norton 2010) and b) a form of 'majority-minority' management, in which the 'other' is problematised (Topolski 2018).

Most of the literature on the Muslim question has focused on how Muslims are constructed as different and 'othered' from the position of the majority, thereby drawing on Orientalist discourses of promoting difference. I argue that the Muslim question can be complicated, by suggesting that the Muslim question is not new within the context of Muslim communities.

That is to say, I read the Muslim question as a question internal to the (Islamic) Tradition. I argue that the question of how Muslims construct and practice Islam, how citizenship, belonging, and the construction of a Muslim difference (Patel 2022) can be read, not from the point of view of the European, but rather, that it has always been read as part of the history of how Muslims attempt to 'work in' and 'work out' Islam (Ahmed 2015).

Epistemic Violence

I use the term 'epistemic violence' from Spivak (1988). For Spivak, epistemic violence emphasises how epistemology (Western knowledge) can be utilised to justify the violent expertise of military and political forces over other non-Western cultures (Morton 2003:19). Epistemic violence is then a form of oppression that dismisses and or devalues the knowledge and the culture of marginalised and colonised people, by excluding their voices within dominant discourses.

For Spivak, the voices of 'subalterns' (groups who are unable to speak for themselves, e.g., Eastern women who have been marginalised, silenced and subjugated socially and economically, within existing hegemonic structures of power) (Wisker 2006:206). It is suggested that epistemic violence is similar to 'otherness' (that certain groups/people, ideas, and concepts are considered as Other, deviant, dangerous, and foreigners) (Morton 2003:37)

Gender Justice

I do not offer a specific definition of gender justice. The intent of the research project was not to assess nor measure the degree to which the case study organisation had operationalised gender justice nor was it to measure or evaluate the effectiveness or impact of the strategic approaches taken by the organisation to meet transformative social justice or gender justice objectives or claims. Therefore, a specific measurable definition of gender justice is not one that I apply to this research project.

Rather, chapters two and three offer genealogies (a method used by Foucault that can be classed as a historical narrative and offers a critique of ideas) to

investigate how the concept of gender justice is a constructed term within different discourses. Chapters two and three, offer a deeper tracing of how (gender and) gender justice has been conceptualised, constructed, and operationalised as part of an unfolding of power relationships within Islamic/Muslim contexts during a range of historical developments, (historical/contemporary) practices, and social-historical and political events. This highlights the plurality of the construction of the concept of gender justice.

In chapter two, I critically examine the constructions of gender justice through the lens of Muslim and/or Islamic feminist discourses on constructions of gender and gender justice. Beginning with Islam's founding discourses set within the historical narrative of Islam's transitional period and the nascent first Muslim community. Chapter three builds on these historical narratives to explore the new discourses within Muslim societies and the wider context of geopolitics. The knowledge production offered within this Muslim and/or Islamic feminist episteme shows how some forms of knowledge can be suppressed, and other forms of knowledge can be generated through power. This underscores how power-knowledge discourses not only produce but suppress knowledge.

In this way, these two chapters, (two and three), provide a foundation from which to critically understand how historical narratives (re)surfaced within the case study organisation, and analyse how they played out sometimes being repeated, reproduced, adopted, adapted, replaced and or rejected.

This lays the groundwork for the empirical chapters (chapters six and seven), where I explore how the Muslim faith actor-orientated approaches within the

case study organisation, during the turn to religion era, shaped the conversations on the construction of gender justice and the Gender Justice Policy. Furthermore, regarding the Muslim faith actor's engagement with gender (mainstreaming in development) and the faith literacy project, I suggest that the relationship to the mobilisation of (religious and gender/development) knowledge resulted in certain types of knowledge being suppressed and I show how power (relationships) produced 'othered' forms of knowledge. The definition of Gender Justice is set within this wider debate.

INTRODUCING THE CASE STUDY ORGANISATION – ISLAMIC RELIEF

This section seeks to outline the development of Islamic Relief to draw attention to the context within which gender justice became a central focus. Indeed, the period covered by this study. The period, covered in this study, was marked by significant historical and political tensions including the consequences of the War on Terror and concurrent shifting narratives within international development. This signified a period of evolving narratives around the gender, religion, and development nexus, and how (re)orientalism surfaced in this study in the methodology, and two empirical chapters, which follow the genealogy chapters (two and three), I will explore how Islamic Relief (hereafter IR), as a Muslim development organisation, and how this group of faith actors within this development agency navigated these complex issues around gender, development, and how (re)orientalism played out in this case study.

Islamic Relief, established in 1984 in Birmingham, UK, has in over 40 years, grown from a small humanitarian relief organisation to a major player in international development. Founded by Dr Hany El-Banna and a group of medical doctors, the organisation was initially created to respond to the famine in Africa, particularly in Sudan, and has since evolved into a global network which operates in over 40 countries (IR website).

Early Years and Humanitarian Focus

In its early years, IR concentrated on providing emergency aid in the wake of natural disasters and conflicts. The organisation's initial efforts were characterised by rapid response to crises, delivering essential supplies such as food, medical aid, and temporary shelter. This period saw significant activities in regions such as Afghanistan, Sudan, and Bosnia, where the need for immediate relief was urgent. The organisation's involvement in Bosnia during the 1990s conflict, providing lifesaving assistance to war-torn communities, highlighted its commitment to humanitarianism driven by the Islamic principle of compassion for those in need (IR website)

Transition to Development

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, IR began to broaden its focus from short-term emergency relief to long-term development projects. This transition was marked by a strategic shift to address the root causes of poverty and suffering, rather than simply alleviating their symptoms. The organisation recognised that sustainable development required more than immediate aid; it needed a more comprehensive approach to building communities.

Key to this transition was the implementation of integrated development programmes aimed at improving education, healthcare, livelihoods, and infrastructure. For example, Islamic Relief launched numerous initiatives to support education and healthcare, the organisation undertook projects to improve maternal and child health, combat diseases, and establish health facilities in underserved areas (IR Website).

Development and the Era of Global Goals

These key areas of development (education, maternal and child health, and poverty alleviation) more broadly reflected the trends and narratives within international development. That is to say, they mimic the era of global goals in international development.

In the early 2000s, the United Nations (UN) unveiled two key development agendas: The first, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) consisted of eight goals focusing on areas such as education; maternal health; poverty reduction; and gender equality. The second, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were launched by the UN in 2015, aimed to build on the MDGs, and set out 17 goals including climate action; water and sanitation; industry, innovation and infrastructure; peace, justice, and strong institutions; alongside partnerships for goals.

One of the projects that highlight this evolution at IR was the water and sanitation programmes aimed at significantly improving access to clean water and sanitation facilities and collaborations with partners on climate adaptation and climate change. More saliently, for this thesis, their advocacy work and campaigns against gender-based violence resulted in engagement with global

organisations (like the UN) to promote sustainable development and social justice (Petersen 2018, Tomalin, Haustein et al. 2019, Pertek 2024).

Development and the Era of Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming

The Gender Justice Policy at IR was developed during this time of transition.

The shift from humanitarian emergency relief to sustainable development actors, and within the discourses of development's global goals then further illustrate the transition that was occurring at IR (De Cordier 2010, Petersen 2018, Pertek, Almugahed et al. 2020, Pertek 2024).

I suggest that the Gender Justice Policy, on the one hand, may have signalled IR's intention to transition from humanitarian emergency relief to development actors based on the organisation's recognition that religion had a role to play in global development. On the other hand, the organisation's formal introduction of gender into three specific strands of the organisation's operational processes: strategic, programmes, and advocacy levels, marked a period of increased surveillance and regulations to meet dominant development discourses around compliance in the post-9/11 era and the War on Terror.

Increased Surveillance and Regulation

Post-9/11, there was a significant increase in surveillance and regulatory scrutiny of Muslim charities (Benthall 2007). Islamic Relief had to implement more rigorous compliance measures to satisfy the requirements of Western governments and international bodies. This included enhancing financial transparency, adopting anti-terrorism financing policies, and regularly auditing

its programs and transactions to ensure they were not inadvertently supporting terrorist activities.

The period following the events of September 11, 2001, marked a significant transformation for international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), particularly those with religious affiliations. As a prominent faith-based humanitarian organisation, IR found itself in a complex landscape shaped by the War on Terror and a broader international shift towards recognising the role of religion in global development.

It is worth stressing that when IR began their conversation around gender (in 2014) this had been between the period of the MDGs and SDGs. Moreover, at that time, IR was the only Muslim UK-based international development agency to take an alternative framework to explore gender and development outside of the context of dominant gender and development discourses; for example, gender mainstreaming, which had been a secular enterprise.

IR was intent on having their conversation on development and gender through a different framework, namely an Islamic-inspired approach. This then set them apart from similar Muslim UK-based development agencies, for example, Muslim Aid, and from mainstream secular development agencies like Oxfam.

Furthermore, the previously prevailing development discourse of religion as a hindrance to the promotion of both development and gender equality goals, and international development's subsequent turn to religion (Tomalin 2020), laid the ground for IR's approach to attempt to reconcile, if temporarily, secular

development and feminist discourses and on the role of religion to offer solutions to gender inequalities and sustainable development agendas/goals.

IR's strategic shift was further reinforced by partnerships with various international bodies, including the United Nations and the World Bank, allowing IR to play a more significant role in the global development discourse. These forms of partnerships required IR, who had operated on the margins of development, to commit to transparency and accountability, to comply with enhanced governance structures, and to create new policies and procedures that aligned with international standards and practices.

The War on Terror and the Turn to Religion on Islamic Relief

The War on Terror, by the United States and its allies, had significant implications for Muslim-majority countries and organisations associated with Islam. IR, despite its humanitarian mission, faced increased scrutiny and challenges due to its religious identity. In Chapters Six and Seven, I will discuss how this confluence of shifting discourses became increasingly important for them as an organisation.

In the decision to transition from humanitarian relief to sustainable development actors, Post-9/11, Muslim charities faced increased surveillance and experienced significant scrutiny. Moreover, in the period of the turn to religion in development, partnerships with national and international development donors, such as DFID, (as it was at the time), meant increased scrutiny and adherence to regulatory standards. It also meant that the organisation would need to comply with dominant development narratives like gender equality and develop gender mainstreaming policies.

In chapter seven, I argue how this increased scrutiny and adherence to regulatory standards became part of an (en)forced collaboration with donor agencies through the mechanism of gender (mainstreaming strategies in international development). Here I argue that gender (in development) became the vehicle through which compliance and enforced collaboration played out in this case. Importantly, I make the argument that this enforced collaboration and compliance with regulatory standards on gender (in development) is the reframing of colonial feminism (Ahmed 1992) during the turn to religion era.

The arguments that I develop in this thesis, which I will present in the empirical chapters (six and seven) are based on primary data collected through semi-structured interviews, with seven interviewees at Islamic Relief (IR), which were conducted between November 2017 to May 2018. The final sample is comprised of seven senior staff members who had been engaged with the development of the gender justice policy and/or who were involved with gender advocacy at IR during the formal introduction of gender into the organisation; the development of a gender justice policy; and the early stages of the implementation period of the policy.

Subsequently, the interviewees offer a unique perspective on a) how organisational culture change, brought about as the consequence of the introduction of gender inclusion, through the intersection of religion, development, and gender, had been experienced at IR, more specifically, by this sample; b) the interviews offer a retrospective account of the process. This provides insight into the lived experience of faith actor-oriented approaches as

gender advocates and within a Muslim faith-based organisation, during the post-War on Terror and the turn to religion period.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND KEY CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

The research employed a case study approach, I will discuss the reasons for this choice in the methodology chapter (five) and followed a qualitative approach. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the participants, which were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and secondary data was based on an analysis of the Gender Justice Policy, which was launched in 2015.

I employed a magpie approach, which I outline in chapter four, drawing on various critical theories and concepts (some of which I have discussed above in this chapter), to provide a range of lenses through which to explore the data and offer fresh analysis to the research project. In this way, this study intends to make three contributions:

- 1) Theoretically – I answer the call (by Emma Tomalin) for faith actor-orientated approaches to the turn to religion
- 2) Conceptually – I introduce the concept of re-orientalism (from Lisa Lau)
- 3) Methodologically – I call for a new methodology for understanding and undertaking Muslim-on-Muslim research in the social sciences.

HOW THIS THESIS IS ORGANISED

Chapter One – Introduction - has set out the context of and aims for the project. Within the subfield of Religion and Development (RaD), there remains a

significant gap in research on the experiences of religious subjects/faith actors during the 'turn to religion' era, particularly concerning Muslim faith actors. This gap is most evident in the post-9/11 context, where these actors navigated a complex geopolitical landscape. In this landscape, mobilising religious knowledge on gender and gender justice within the UK became a contested and critical site. This study aims to contribute to the field by addressing this gap.

Furthermore, the existing literature within RaD and Gender and Development (GAD) has largely overlooked the experiences of Muslim faith actors in development, especially those who represent an elite sample within the UK context. This research project seeks to fill this void by exploring the cross-gender experiences of these actors as they mobilise religious knowledge to address gender and gender justice praxis. The focus on Muslim religious subjects within Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) in the UK provides a unique lens through which to examine how these actors, operating on the margins of mainstream development work, engage with and operationalise religious knowledge in pursuit of social justice.

Additionally, this study contributes to the geographical gap in the literature by focusing on the agentic experiences of Muslim faith actors within FBOs and NGOs during the turn to religion period. These actors, practising their faith as religious minorities in the diaspora, operated within a context that has been underexplored in existing scholarship.

In the chapters that follow, I will delve into the relationship between the operationalisation of religious knowledge and the intersection with feminist and

development discourses on gender and gender justice. I argue that disciplinary mechanisms within development—such as dividing practices, othering, and the reinforcement of dominant discourses—have led Muslim faith actors to perceive themselves as the ‘new Orientalists.’ This perception has, in turn, prompted them to engage in (re)orientalising strategies.

The thesis will also examine how new partnerships between FBOs and development donors during the turn to religion era became mechanisms for enforced collaboration and compliance with dominant development discourses. While these donor-led engagements incorporated faith actors from Muslim FBOs, they often limited the actors' roles to instrumental goals, as highlighted by Tomalin (2020).

However, much of the emerging attention on the compatibility of religion and development has been built on the same dividing practices that have historically characterised the development sector. I argue that initiatives such as the faith-literacy project and gender mainstreaming in development have resurfaced Orientalist strategies, revealing that Orientalism remains an unfinished project within development. Furthermore, gender discourse within this context has often functioned as a reframing of colonial feminism, as discussed by Ahmed (1992).

To support this argument, the next two chapters (two and three) will begin with a genealogical analysis, tracing how these discourses were constructed in the past and how they are being remade in the present. This approach will provide a critical foundation for understanding the contemporary dynamics at play in the intersection of religion, gender, and development.

In chapters two and three I undertake a genealogical approach to examine the constructions of gender debates and discourses within the Islamic context. By providing a historical overview of gender discourses within Islamic contexts, and the debates within Muslim and Islamic feminist scholarship, the genealogical analysis offered in chapters two and three aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the ways in which these concepts are constructed, contested, reimagined, and redefined.

Chapter Two – (Genealogy) Founding Discourses - explores the key historical moments that have shaped gender discourses within Islamic contexts; in exploring the founding discourses (the Prophetic Period), Muslim and Islamic feminist scholarship provides insightful and contextual highlights of how the concepts of gender and gender justice have been both endogenously and exogenously shaped and how Muslim and Islamic feminists have uncovered hidden conflicts within the discourses.

Chapter Three – (Genealogy) New Discourses - shifts the focus from the contextual period of the colonial to the post-colonial period, the new discourses highlight the impact of colonial feminism as discussed by Ahmed (1992) and the pernicious and persistent way in which this discourse has implications for feminist praxis in Muslim majority contexts and within geopolitical discourses where colonial feminism resurfaced in the War on Terror and post-9/11 era.

Chapter Four – Theoretical and Conceptual Tools - outlines the magpie approach I take to develop a theoretical and conceptual framework to explore the research questions. I draw on several critical theorists including the work of

Michel Foucault (1978), Judith Butler (1990), Edward Said (1978), and feminist scholarship Clare Hemmings (2011); and Gayatri Spivak (1988). I also draw on the work of Muslim academics including Shahab Ahmed (2015), Talal Asad (1996), and Zareena Grewal (2014). It is also here I introduce Lisa Lau's concept of re-orientalism (2009) and how I intend to apply it in this research project.

In this project, I use a magpie approach drawing on various critical theories and concepts, some of which I have discussed in the Introduction. In chapter four I discuss the magpie approach in detail. Here I outline the theoretical and conceptual tools used in this research. By drawing on several different critical theoretical authors and concepts, including those already mentioned, along with feminist queer theory, I look to trouble gender (Butler 1990) and the violent binaries that repeat as a consequence of the dividing practices. That produces discursive operations, resulting in binary formulas.

I apply this approach to explore the following three research questions:

- How have Muslim UK development faith actors operationalised religious knowledge for gender/gender justice?
- What is the relationship between the operationalisation of this religious knowledge and (re)orientalism?
- In what ways have debates between feminism and Islam surfaced, resurfaced, and been (temporarily) reconciled?

These questions will be explored through the experiences of Muslim UK development faith actors/religious subjects who were engaged with the introduction of gender and the development of a Gender Justice Policy (hereafter GJP), and who mobilised religious knowledge as part of the faith-literacy project, during the turn to religion period. The development faith actors

were located at the headquarters, within the UK context, at Islamic Relief (IR). I will explore these questions in detail in chapter six when I discuss the empirical findings on gender, and in chapter seven when I present my analysis and discussion on gender justice.

Chapter Five – Research Design and Methodology - presents my research design. In this chapter, I discuss the challenges of undertaking Muslim-on-Muslim research and highlight the need for more research on this issue. I explore how Muslim-on-Muslim research is still a relatively new area of research (Quraishi 2008, Abbas 2010, Ryan, Kofman et al. 2011, Hussain and Cunningham 2022) and outline the need to develop new methodological tools, in the same way that feminist researchers did when they entered into the field (Oakley 1981, Oakley 1998, Oakley 2016). To support this, I provide a detailed account of the data collection and analysis process and the importance of using self-reflexivity in the field. In this chapter, I will discuss how the use of the reflexivity approach in my design and methodology, especially when doing research with a cross-gender sample, became an important tool to overcome the challenges of insufficient studies in the area of Muslim-on-Muslim research. In this way, this project aims to make an original contribution on the challenges facing particular researchers when working on particular topics such as gender or when using feminist praxis/theorisations.

This research uses a case study approach to undertake an ascending analysis of power. The main method of data collection is interviews with Muslim UK development faith actors, within the case study organisation. These faith actors

constitute an elite group of interviewees. I will discuss the research design choice, the data collection, and the analysis process further in chapter five.

Chapter Six - (Empirical) Gender - draws on the primary data from the interviews with the interlocutors to explore how the concept of gender is constructed and operationalized within the case study organisation. Here I explore how gender remains untroubled within the case study organisation. I also demonstrate how the heteronormative gender binary model continues to reproduce hierarchical gender power dynamics, despite attempts to use the language of religion to provide new narratives from within the discursive tradition of Islam (Asad 1996).

In chapter six, I will follow the journey of how gender was worked-in and worked-out (Ahmed 2015) through the faith actors' recollection of the experiences of producing the GJP as they attempted to introduce and work with the concept of gender in the context of their organisation. I begin by outlining how the faith actors (within the context of IR) introduced and attempted to infuse gender into their organisational context.

Here I will examine some of the challenges the faith actors encountered in working with a contested concept like gender when formally introduced into a new context. In working with an abstract concept like 'gender' the faith actors within the organisation involved with the development of the GJP had to engage in many strategies, manoeuvres, and tactics to infuse gender into existing ways of organising (Eyben 2010:54). In working with a contested concept like gender, some of the challenges for these development faith actors include working with

the various complexities of the cultural intellectual baggage in which gender is viewed as being discursively produced within Western and feminist cultural constructions. I will show how these cultural constructions of gender troubled IR, particularly in light of the discourses on colonial feminism (Ahmed 1992) and the hegemony of 'gender equality' within Western feminist storytelling (Hemmings 2011:11).

However, I will argue that the basic mechanism of the normative gender binary model did not trouble IR. Rather, they appropriated the gender binary model and further normalised it within their context, and by extension within the context of the discursive tradition of Islam (Asad 1996) and development discourses on gender and development.

Chapter Seven - (Empirical) Gender Justice - explores the role of the new Orientalists and the agentic experiences of the interlocutors in developing the Gender Justice Policy. I discuss how the mechanism of the faith-literacy project may act as part of the disciplinary techniques of power relations, whereby European systems of knowledge come to be dominant, marginal knowledge is suppressed, and the native informant can be trained (Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007, Bhabra, Gebrial et al. 2018).

I trace the argument that Orientalism remains unfinished within development through the faith actor's experiences of working-in and working-out (Ahmed 2015), the formal introduction of the gender justice policy within the organisation. I highlight the various mechanisms of (re)Orientalism in operation within the context of the faith actors' experiences of mobilising religious

knowledge to operationalise gender and gender justice praxis through the language of religion and the language of development, and here I draw attention to how the language of feminism is silenced.

I build on this analysis to exemplify how faith actors' experiences of working-in and working-out (Ahmed 2015) gender were transferred into the Gender Justice Policy. In drawing on the analysis within chapter six, in chapter seven, I offer a discussion on gender justice to show how IR resisted the idea of the hegemony of the knowledge production of feminist cultural and Western cultural constructions of gender as the only language for gender and gender justice praxis.

I suggest that having problematised the feminist and Western cultural constructions of gender, the faith actors then reformulated the feminist/western cultural 'secular script' into a 'sacred script' (Tomalin 2020:21). I intend to show that through the retrieval of knowledge from the past, they were able to offer a discursively produced construction of gender from within the Islamic intellectual tradition that was less troubling. In this way, they produced a more instrumental approach to shifting scripts that enabled them to work with development discourses and thereby temporarily reconcile the debates between (Western) feminism and Islam.

In returning to the past, primarily through relocating the concept of gender into the location of Islamic history and the first Muslims (Afsaruddin 2013), and through the engagement with the Islamic intellectual tradition, they remade the construction of gender as one outside of the dominant Western and feminist

discourse, and one that might even be viewed as decolonising gender from the cultural intellectual baggage of the past. This is where the genealogical analysis offered in Chapters Two and Three, resurface, thereby highlighting how the present is discursively (re)produced within the discourses of the past.

Chapter Eight – Conclusion - concludes the thesis, offering a summary of the key findings and how this project contributes to the field of study. I will also propose further areas of research based on this project. In the previous two chapters (six and seven), I sought to understand how Muslim UK development faith actors operationalised religious knowledge for gender/gender justice within the context of a Muslim development organisation in the UK. In chapter six, I drew on the interview data, thereby prioritising the voices of the participants to offer a micro-level of analysis on the construction of gender to examine in what ways the various discourses of Islam, feminism, and development surfaced, resurfaced, and were temporarily reconciled within this case.

In examining UK Muslim development faith actors' experiences of constructing gender in the context of a Muslim development organisation these practices revealed how knowledge/power and resistance at the micro-level of Muslim UK development faith actors' experiences mirrored wider practices in global contexts. In chapter seven, I draw on the Gender Justice Policy and the interviews. I describe and analyse the faith actor's experiences by taking an ascending analysis of power¹ to understand how the faith actors mobilised and

¹ I draw on Foucault's instruction to researchers to undertake an analysis of power at the micro-levels of society. In this case, and specifically in relation to the chapter on gender I focus on the micro-analysis of power at the level of the faith actors' experiences to introducing gender into

operationalised religious knowledge to develop a GJP² within a religious framework. I view these two chapters as interlocking.

In the empirical chapters, I argue that UK Muslim faith actors in development may be viewed as the new Orientalists (within development). That is to say, the faith-literacy project might be considered to have acted/repeated previous Orientalist mechanisms of generating and spreading knowledge on the 'other', in which, faith actors in development might be viewed as having a utility and docility to the development agenda (Balchin 2003, Hopkins and Patel 2006, De Cordier 2010, Tomalin 2020, Tomalin 2021).

I went on to argue that the disciplinary mechanism of producing knowledge on the other by fusing the language of religion and the language of development may have resulted in the internalisation of self-disciplinary techniques and the mechanism of the orientalist othering (Said 1978). In which, faith actors in development operated as the new Orientalists who re-produced (re)Orientalist discourses on the 'other'. Consequently, the UK Muslim faith actors' engagement with the faith-literacy project located them as part of the normalising power of the mechanism of development institutions. Subsequently, within the turn to religion, the faith actors' mobilisation of religious knowledge production might be classed as part of the disciplinary mechanism of development institutions on generating (scientific) knowledge production.

the context of their organisation to examine the relations of power in order to see what is revealed.

² The mobilisation and operationalisation of religious knowledge occurred during the time period of the turn to religion and as part of the faith-literacy project initiated by DFID and would have predated the launch of the GJP. I will discuss the GJP further in chapter seven.

Moreover, I argue that gender (mainstreaming in development) acted as a reframing of colonial feminism, within the partnerships between Development Donors and Muslim FBOs during the turn to religion.

2. EXPLORING GENDER AND GENDER JUSTICE THROUGH A GENEALOGICAL LENS IN MUSLIM AND ISLAMIC FEMINIST EPISTEME – PART ONE: FOUNDING DISCOURSES

INTRODUCTION

Within contemporary Muslim and Islamic feminist scholarship, the concepts of gender and gender justice have been subject to intense debates and analyses across the social sciences. These debates take on added complexities as they intersect with religious teachings, cultural practices, and socio-political dynamics. This chapter adopts a genealogical approach to explore how discourses surrounding gender and gender justice have been constructed, challenged, and have competed within Muslim and Islamic feminist scholarship.

A genealogical approach, as articulated by Michel Foucault, involves tracing the historical, cultural, and social processes that contribute to the formation and evolution of concepts. In applying this method, Chapter Two (the Foundational Discourses) and Chapter Three (which builds on chapter two, the New Discourses), will uncover the underlying power dynamics, historical forces, and hidden conflicts that have shaped contemporary understandings of gender and gender justice within Muslim and Islamic feminist scholarship and Islamic contexts. This approach allows for a more nuanced examination of how these concepts have been negotiated, resisted, and reimagined over time.

In engaging with Muslim and Islamic feminist scholarship, key debates and themes within this scholarship illuminate the diverse and contested nature of

gender discourses in Muslim-majority contexts. This scholarship provides a varied and rich landscape for exploring how Muslim and Islamic feminist scholars have critically engaged with the concept of gender and gender justice.

Muslim and Islamic feminist scholarship and scholars have critically engaged with traditional interpretations and Islamic teachings and offered alternative readings and explanations for the promotion of gender justice within the Islamic context. By employing a genealogical approach, chapters two and three, intend to offer an analysis of the complex and evolving landscape of gender and gender justice as constructed through the debates within Muslim and Islamic feminists scholarship.

Chapter two is structured to explore two significant historical periods within the Islamic context. As outlined by Laila Ahmed (1992) these historical periods are considered the sites within which the founding discourses on women, gender and Islam were constructed. The first is: Islam's Transitional Period and the nascent First Muslim Community, and the second is: Islam's 'Golden Age' and the establishment of Orthodox Islam.

Section 1: Islam's Transitional Period and the nascent First Muslim Community

The first section delves into the Transitional Period of Islam, focusing on the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the formation of the first Muslim community. This section examines how contemporary Muslim and Islamic feminists revisit Islam's historical past to offer new interpretations of this era's complexities. They investigate how evolving gender norms and the introduction of hierarchical male-female relations during this time laid the groundwork for

future constructions of gender relations and Muslim womanhood. Muslim and Islamic feminist scholars highlight previously hidden conflicts within this period, offering fresh perspectives on the construction of Muslim womanhood.

Section 2: Islam's 'Golden Age' and the Establishment of Orthodox Islam

The second section examines the Golden Age of Islam, characterised by the establishment of orthodox Islam and its intellectual legacy. This period is analysed for how it further entrenched gender constructions, embedding hierarchical male-female relations into Islamic discourses and shaping the concept of Muslim womanhood.

Muslim and Islamic feminists critically engage with this historical period, uncovering hidden conflicts and challenging the traditional intellectual archive of Islam. Their scholarly work led to new constructions of gender and frameworks for gender justice within Islamic contexts, (these frameworks will be examined more closely in chapter three).

The section concludes by exploring how contemporary debates among Muslim and Islamic feminists are influenced by historical intersections of religion, culture, and (geo)politics. The impact of colonialism and post-colonial histories in shaping these new discourses is introduced, setting the stage for further examination in chapter three.

Genealogical Approach

A genealogical approach offers a powerful framework for analysing the complex history of gender and gender justice as read through the lens of Muslim and Islamic feminist literature. Foucault's (1978) genealogical methodology enriches

the analysis by uncovering the historical forces shaping contemporary gender discourses and debates. Furthermore, genealogy allows for a critical and deeper understanding of how within Islamic contexts (gender) justice frameworks have been constructed, maintained at critical moments, and at other times have been informed and transformed through power relations and socio-political forces both endogenously and exogenously. It reveals that these constructions (of gender and gender justice frameworks) are products of specific historical and cultural contingencies.

In this thesis, chapters two and three apply a genealogical approach to explore the construction of gender and gender justice within Muslim and Islamic feminist knowledge production. This approach reveals the complexities and conflicts through which knowledge and power relations have historically emerged and evolved in contemporary Muslim contexts and Islamic societies. It critically examines how what is accepted as 'truth' is shaped by specific power dynamics (Foucault 1978, Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007, Feder 2014).

Using a genealogical framework - uncovering hidden histories, analysing the interplay between power and knowledge, challenging universal narratives, and highlighting conflicts and contestations - provides a foundation to understand how contemporary gender and gender justice constructions in Muslim contexts are informed by their historical roots. These critical reflections support the empirical chapters of the thesis by offering insights into the enduring influences of historical power dynamics on present-day gender discourses. Importantly, these genealogies showcase how these persistent and pernicious discourses then come to the surface and resurface within the case study organisation.

The History of Ideas: Muslim and Islamic Feminist debates and discourses

Muslim and Islamic feminist debates and discussions surrounding the founding discourses have been shaped through dialectal movements between the past and present. Thereby reflecting how the intersection of religion, politics, culture, and history shapes the present. The new Muslim and Islamic feminist's intellectual contribution to the discourses and debates that trace the history of the intersection between 'women/gender'³ and Islam' (in the Middle East, particularly) would suggest that the intersection of 'gender'⁴ and more specifically the posing of the 'woman question' within the Muslim context⁵ has been both deeply controversial and highly politicised, what is more, it continues to be so to this day (Mernissi(Mernissi 1991) (Mernissi 1999), 1991; El Saadawi (El Saadawi and Moghissi 1998), 1998; Ahmed, 1992; Wadud, 1999; Moghadam, 2002 ; Viner, 2002 ; Barlas, 2002 ; Mir-Hosseini , 2009; Ahmed-Ghosh , 2008; Yaqoob 2008 , Badran, 2009, Barlow & Akbarzadeh, 2006; Hidayatullah, 2014).

³ Although much of the literature employs 'woman' 'women' and 'womanhood' as its main category and unit of analysis, for this genealogy and because I am engaging with the corpus of the literature, and to enable a more nuanced reading of the literature I will *also* use 'gender', as an analytical category. The corpus of the literature covers the period within which broader feminist debates in relation to feminist theories and the adoption of 'gender' as an analytical category occurred in (See, Beasley, 2005; Cornwall et al, 2007 - particularly Sardenberg). I have applied both 'woman/en/hood' and 'gender' as part of my categories of analysis so as to avoid the conflation of 'gender' with 'woman/en/hood' and to assist in identifying the different approaches to 'gender' that have been used within the corpus of the literature and the complexities that this then brings to understanding the debates and discourses in relation to 'women' and 'Islam'.

⁴ See above foot note.

⁵ Here I am discussing broad narratives rather than a specific historical 'time' period, geographical or Islamic schools of thought, which have all played a part in the discourse.

Indeed, much of the literature in which I trace the intersection of 'women'; 'gender'; 'feminism(s)' and 'Islam'; has within it a deeply entrenched narrative of the 'Other'. Whilst perhaps not unexpected, however, it is rather problematic. It poses several challenges to investigating the history of ideas around the construction of gender and gender justice, for women, within the discursive tradition of Islam (Asad 1996).

One particular challenge is how to undertake an analysis of present ideas that have been shaped within a body of literature that is peppered with binaries and is the result of the inheritance of binaries from within essentially contested concepts and debates.

An example of this is found within the 'Muslim secular feminist versus Islamic feminist' discourses (Mojab, 2001 ; Moghadam, 2002 ; Badran, 2008 ; Zia, 2009). Wherein multiple contested concepts are being played out, each with '...different meanings that mean different things to different people and at different contexts' (Mir-Hosseini, 2011:67).

In other words, these narratives cannot simply be read within the 'context' of the topic but rather need to be viewed 'intertextually' with other similar concepts and debates, such as, within 'Islam versus the West'; 'Western feminism(s) versus Third World and Muslim Feminism(s)' (Mohanty et al, 1991 ; Bulbeck, 1998 ; Badran, 2008); and debates within 'Western feminisms versus the Mainstream' (Steans, 2003 ; Rai, 2008). All of which form part of the overall field.

As such, the challenges posed by these multiple binaries, which are still being played out, particularly within the context of 'feminism versus Islam', make

negotiating and navigating the literature, to avoid being caught up within these overlapping multiple binaries, at times impossible and even more difficult to disentangle or to separate from one another.

Indeed, to understand contemporary constructions of gender and gender justice as they appeared during the 'turn to religion' era (Tomalin 2020) and how those current and new debates and discourses were shaped, it is necessary to return to the past and to take a historical perspective, to understand the context within which questions around the construction of gender and gender justice, for women, within the discursive tradition of Islam, were first posed and how they were and continued then to be (re/de) constructed. Only then can a more nuanced understanding of these intersections be examined, and the complexities better understood in this case study.

The challenge is how to present this genealogical analysis without repeating or falling into these binaries and presenting them as truth claims, particularly when the competing binaries cannot be read out of the literature. Indeed, at times multiple binaries are operating simultaneously. Attempting to disentangle them from one another is a clumsy process and one that I struggled with.

Nevertheless, these binaries now inform the discourses and have to be part of the discussion presented here.

Terms such as, 'Islam' and the 'West', while being oppositional are also interdependent and relational concepts, as are many of the above discourses. Furthermore '...their relationship to one another is in a process of constant negotiation' (Ali 2008: xiii). This implies that these terms (for example Islam and

the West) are not static concepts. As such, my reading of the episteme attempts to show how various binary concepts are part of shaping these discourses. I do this by linking key historical periods within the intersection of Islamic and World history to understand how the present is shaped by the past. Using the framework the construction of Muslim women's narrative identity⁶ in those periods has contributed to existing, current, and is continuously shaping new and contemporary debates and discourses around women/gender and Islam.

In tracing the episteme of Muslim and or feminist (secular Muslim and or Islamic) academic scholarship on the subject of women/gender and Islam, I identify three broad frameworks that have shaped the discourses on Muslim women's narrative identity. These are the role of patriarchy; the role of the woman question; and the role of feminisms. In chapters two and three, I draw on these frameworks to trace how these three frameworks interweave and have shaped the episteme while showing the shifting constructions of concepts around the Muslim woman, gender, and gender justice, in shaping and reshaping discourses.

Women/Gender and Islam - The construction of the Muslim woman

⁶ The notion of a single 'construction' and of a single Muslim women's narrative 'identity' is problematic on many levels, particularly the notion of 'Muslim Women' as a monolith group with a single narrative 'identity' – based solely on religion as is the notion of their being a single 'construction' of such a narrative and this is my position at all times. However, as this paper is taking a historical review of the corpus of the literature, I will start with what is viewed as the normative position, in order to present the evolution of: a) the historical 'constructions'; b) the historical 'constructions' of the 'Muslim woman' within the Muslim context and within feminist literature; and, c) critique these various narrative constructions as presented within the literature through the body of this review.

Four distinct periods within the intersection of Islamic and World history can be identified as contributing to the construction of Muslim women's narrative 'identity'⁷. The first period is the transitional period from pre-Islamic society to the first Muslim community, during the 6th to the 7th (1st Islamic) century, in Arabia. The second period, during 8th– 15th century, is a period often described as part of Islam's 'Golden Age' or the Islamic Medieval conquest within the Middle East and beyond. The third period is the start of the 19th - 20th century and is the period marked by the colonial to post-colonial period. Finally, the fourth period is the 21st century, and this is marked by post 9/11.

Leila Ahmed (1992) in her book tracing the historical roots of the debates on women, gender and Islam describes the first two periods as part of the 'founding discourses' and the third period as forming the 'new discourses'.

These two distinctions provide a useful conceptual framework to examine how these different periods have contributed to the constructions of Muslim women's narrative identities within these periods. It also assists in identifying the different narratives and the factors that lead to their construction. In addition, it will show how interdependent such narrative constructions are in shaping these discourses and debates. In other words, a historical approach shows how the feminist lens has shaped debates and uncovers subaltern voices through which to further examine and understand the complexities of the debates and discourses on women/gender and Islam.

⁷ See the above footnote.

According to Ahmed (1992) this first period, the transitional period from pre-Islamic Arabia to Islamic Arabia and the second period that of the Muslim conquests, marks the starting point: a) when Arab women's identities first changed, and b) where the '...discourses on women and gender in Islamic societies...' were shaped (Ahmed 1992:2). This period is then the ontological starting point for discourses on what are now often contested sites about and on Muslim women in Islam; issues such as: veiling, seclusion, rights, equality, identity and even citizenship (Ahmed, 1992; Mernissi, 1987; 1991; El Saadawi, 1998). It is also the period within which Islamic epistemological foundations became part of what is now viewed as Islamic canon (the *Sharia*⁸ and *fiqh*⁹) (Mernissi, 1997; Abou El Fadl, 2001) and, it is now increasingly being seen as the site by Muslim feminists¹⁰, especially Islamic feminists¹¹, as the methodological site from which to engage in new discourses on women/gender and Islam¹² (Mernissi, 1991; Wadud 1999; Barlas 2002).

⁸ Translated from Arabic to mean 'the way' and is part of the moral code and religious law of Islam – it is 'the totality of God's Will as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad' (Mir-Hosseini 2009:1)

⁹ Islamic Jurisprudence - the human process to identify legal rules from the sacred sources of Islam (Mir-Hosseini 2009:1)

¹⁰ I use the term Muslim feminists/feminism to identify all scholarship from feminists who are engaged with Muslim women's emancipation, this includes 'secular' and Islamic feminists, and who may or may not identify themselves as Muslim.

¹¹ Islamic feminist/feminism is specifically used to refer to those who use an Islamic framework to address Muslim women's emancipation.

¹² Islamic feminists are part of the Muslim reformist movement within Islam. Muslim Reformists are often categorised as taking a liberal view of Islam, their key methodology is to reinterpret Islamic traditions and practices through reinterpreting Islamic texts, and often employ a historical context approach. I will discuss this later in the paper.

FOUNDING DISCOURSES - THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD AND THE FIRST MUSLIM COMMUNITY - MUSLIM FEMINISTS UNCOVERING HIDDEN CONFLICTS

The transitional period from pre-Islamic society to the first Muslim community in Arabia is often cited by Islamists¹³ as the period when women were given (by Islam) more rights than they had held previously within pre-Islamic societies comparative to the period, and of both local and neighbouring societies at the time (Ahmed 1992: 3; Mernissi 1987; El Saadawi 1998). This view is however challenged by Muslim feminist writers. Ahmed (1992) and Mernissi (1987) claim that the degree of female self-determination within pre-Islamic societies, such as the Jahiliya¹⁴ Arabs within pre-Islamic Arabia, is often overlooked in Islamic history and that for *some* women the introduction of Islam eroded their position within the social order of the time. According to Ahmed (1992), Mernissi (1987) and El Saadawi (1998), Islam, during this transitional period brought with it an end to customs which had previously afforded some women autonomy; greater control over their sexuality; and economic, social and political agency. In its place, these authors, present the argument that Islam instituted patriarchal practices, though, they do not go on to imply that Islam invented or introduced practices such as polygamy. Rather, they argued that such practices already existed and were then instituted into the foundations of Islam and are now seen as part of Islam's tradition.

¹³ Defined as someone who follows Islam very strictly.

¹⁴ The nomadic tribes of Arabia during pre-Islamic period while predominately patriarchal, they also had matrilineal and polyandry customs.

As Islam spread towards new territories within the Arabian Peninsula and beyond, the argument presented is that within Islam patriarchal practices continued and became accentuated and dovetailed onto practices that were already present within these societies (Ahmed 1992: 33), resulting in traditions and customs related to women, such as veiling, seclusion and polygamy, being framed within patriarchal and even misogynist laws and legal systems (Ahmed, 1992:67). These systems were often based on Greek, Roman, Judaic, Christian, Zoroastrian, and Byzantine traditions, and were then absorbed, adopted, and adapted into Islam. These various patriarchal practices, customs, traditions, and legal systems increasingly become part of Islam's inheritance (Ahmed 1992: 37) and its legacy. The result of this multicultural inheritance is that there is now a Muslim social order in which gender and sexual inequality have become a feature of Islamic societies (Mernissi, 1987; Ahmed, 1992; Moghissi, 1999).

First Muslim Community – the Wives of the Prophet Muhammed

Leila Ahmed's (1992) re-engagement with the archive of Islam's historical first family, the Prophet Muhammed and his wives, opened the door to tracing the changing roles of women during the Islamic transitional period through the changing roles of women close to the Prophet Muhammad. Specifically, Ahmed compares the experiences of his first wife, Khadijah, to that of his youngest wife, Aisha, during his lifetime¹⁵.

¹⁵ Khadijah – was 40 years old, had been previously married, was a widow, had inherited property and was a trader, she employed and proposed marriage to Muhammad, through her female 'slave'. She was also the first to convert to Islam. Her wealth and connections assisted

Using marriage as her conceptual framework, Ahmed's comparative analysis of these two women draws attention to a) the different roles that these women played in the different stages of Muhammad's prophethood, and b) the differences between each woman's level of self-determination and agency during this period. More broadly, Ahmed's analysis highlighted the extent to which female and female sexual self-determination changed during this transitional period. Ahmed puts forward the thesis that this period marked the critical moment that Islam moved furthermore towards patriarchal, patrilineal, and paternity normative practices; a choice though not new under Islam, but one which essentially changed the position of women following the 'establishment of Islam' (Ahmed 1992:46; El Saadawi, 1998).

First Muslim Community – Muslim Feminists Uncovering Hidden Conflicts

Fatema Mernissi (1987) similarly suggests that the Islamic transition from Jahiliya (the age of ignorance and barbarism) to Islamic Arabia (civilisation) imposed various regulations and limitations on women; for Mernissi the transitional period saw female, but not male sexuality regulated through institutionalised patriarchal marriage practices (Mernissi 1987:46). The establishment under Islam of the family unit along patriarchal and patrilineal marriage structures held then within it a hierarchal assumption of dominance of

Muhammad during his early prophethood, she also bore his only surviving children, including Fatima, the wife of Ali, the fourth caliph and through whom all of his descendants now claim heritage to the Prophet. On the other hand, Aisha – was born a Muslim, to Muslim parents, she was given in marriage by her father, Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, when she was 6 and went to live with her husband at the age of 9. She had neither property nor wealth; she was the only virgin wife and was accused of adultery. Her political activities after the death of Muhammad have led to controversy and divided opinions, often viewed negatively by Shia Muslims and there is even a hadith which may have been influenced by her (although there are questions about its authenticity) which suggests women ought not to be trusted with 'affairs'.

one sex over another, i.e. male over female (Ahmed, 1992; Moghissi, 1999 ; Ali, 2008). According to Ahmed, this hierarchal relation between the sexes, along with patriarchal marriage structures, now instituted by Islam, existed in tension with the '...egalitarian conception of gender inhering in the ethical vision of Islam' (Ahmed 1992:64).

Female-Male Gender Relations: Muslim Feminists Uncovering Hidden Conflicts in Islam's Founding Discourses

The establishment of Islam from the period after the death of Prophet Muhammad and towards the Islamic conquest brought with it the seeds of separation¹⁶ both in terms of the overall egalitarian message of the Quran¹⁷ and towards competing understandings of gender within Islam. To start with there was a splitting apart of Islam's overall egalitarian message; this split led to the construction of two distinct voices within Islam: a) an 'ethical voice' in the form of the egalitarian message of the Quran, and b) a 'pragmatic voice' in the form of regulations, '...a body of legal and political thought...' (Ahmed 1992:66; Abou El' Fadl, 2001). During this period alternative and different 'visions' as to how and what kind of Islamic society Prophet Muhammad had meant to establish resulted in the emergence of new debates and Islamic sects. These groups not only held different views on women but also raised questions and challenged establishment Islam as to whether the practices and laws related to the first

¹⁶ This paper will not to discuss the separation between Sunni and Shia Islam or other sects such as the Sufi's, Kharijis and Qamatians

¹⁷ The written text of the Divine Speech as given to Muhammad.

Muslim community were meant to be of '...that particular historic moment' and therefore not binding on future Muslim communities (Ahmed 1992:66).

The suggestion then, as it is now for Muslim reformists, was whether some of those practices, for example, marriage to minors (young girls), polygamy and veiling, were '... never intended to be normative or permanently binding for...later ones' but rather were historically and contextually specific to the period (Ahmed 1992:66). Thus, orthodox traditions and practices related to women, such as marriage to young girls, polygamy, and veiling, were rejected by some sects such as the Kharijis and Qamatians but continued as part of establishment Islam's vision of a Muslim social order. It was this orthodox Islam (who viewed such practices as binding) which ultimately came into prominence and whose legacy remains a feature of Islamic societies (Ahmed, 1992).

Mernissi (1987) and Ahmed (1992) conclude that Islam must not have offered all women as an advantageous a position as is often suggested and that the plurality of kinship arrangements during the sixth century in pre-Islamic Arabia offered a social order that some women felt to be in jeopardy under Islam.

Furthermore, Ahmed (1992) suggests that within ten years of Prophet Muhammad's death Muslim women in the first Muslim community had many of the liberties and practices constituted under his leadership, which were markers of Islam's egalitarian principles,¹⁸ revoked by new Islamic leaders; a trend that has continued to shape Islamic discourses on 'women' and gender relations in

¹⁸ During Muhammad's leadership both men and women attended and prayed in the mosque together, women took part in discourses on Islam (Ahmed 1992 61 - 72)

Islam. Mernissi (1987) and Ahmed's (1992) extensive and nuanced examination of that particular period would suggest that the employment of a 'before Islam and after Islam' narrative about women's liberation is then potentially reductive.

The historical evidence, as presented by Ahmed (1992) and Mernissi (1987) would suggest that such views have also failed to recognise the plurality of women's experiences within different social structures and at different times within different contexts and historical periods. It also fails to recognise that gender (the category 'man' and the category 'woman') and gender relations (between male-female) are not always shaped through the prism of religion alone.

The Conflation of Gender with Women: Muslim Feminists Uncovering Hidden Conflicts in the Foundational Discourses

Gender is a social construct and is a relational process, which is continuously being negotiated and renegotiated by individuals within any social context – it is neither static nor ahistorical. Furthermore, this myopic view fails to consider how underlying gender assumptions inherent within any context always play a significant role in how gender narratives are constructed and deconstructed. Factors such as social, economic, and cultural mores also play a major part in shaping both religious discourses and gender relations. The woman question which is then a key feature of discourses on women in Islam more so than 'gender' also fails to focus on gender relations and so reduces gender to mean only 'woman' and as such, separate from 'man'. While this is not a phenomenon specific to gender discourses within and about Islam, (see for example Cornwall et al, (2007) for International Development and Chari (2009) for India); this

notion of Muslim women as a monolithic group with a singular narrative identity is then often a feature of many of the debates and discourses on women/gender and Islam (Barlow & Akbarzadeh, 2006).

FOUNDING DISCOURSES – ISLAM’S ‘GOLDEN AGE’ AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ORTHODOX ISLAM

According to Muslim scholars, like Ahmed, during the Islamic conquest, and establishment of Islam, predominately Sunni Muslims and essentially those with the most political power, such as the Umayyad and then later the Abbasid dynasties, moved further away from Islam’s egalitarian voice and further towards the development of a pragmatic voice. It was during this period that the four dominant orthodox Sunni schools of Islamic thought emerged¹⁹. Jurists and exegetes during this period (often, though not intentionally) in line with those with political powers, namely the caliphate, defined Islam’s orthodoxy during this period and its ‘authoritative legitimacy throughout Islamic history’ (Ahmed, 1992; Abou El’ Fadl, 2001; Barlas 2002).

It is this legal legacy that continues to influence Muslim identities, particularly for Muslim women, even now. During this period the egalitarian voice soon gave way to one which articulated a form of gender and sexual inequality in terms of the ‘spiritual and material realm’ (Ahmed 1992:67) (see for example the writing of al-Ghazali from the Abbasid period). Effectively this meant that Muslim women in this period experienced a different Islam to Muslim men, what is

¹⁹ Hanafi, Shafi’i, Hanbali and Maliki these four schools came to be recognised as ‘absolute authoritative’ (Ahmed 1992:90)

more, they experienced a different Islam to other Muslim women, specifically those from within the first Muslim community.

Orthodox Islam – Establishment of Hierarchical Male-Female Gender Relations

As the Muslim conquests gained momentum the need to create political and legal order resulted in the reintroduction of hierarchal power relations (which was in antitheses to Islam's egalitarian message) within these new emerging Islamic societies during this period. This was further mirrored by hierarchal gender discourses; the implication for both men and women at this time and through the ages is that it significantly shaped gender relations between the sexes (Ahmed, 1992). Thus, having instituted patriarchal marriage practices as part of Islam, Orthodox Islam then extended the hierarchical assumptions inherent within this type of family unit structure, by placing a greater priority on '...women's obligation to be wives and mothers'²⁰ (Ahmed 1992:66).

The Construction of an Idealised Muslim Womanhood - the Wife and Mother

This first narrative identity of 'wife and mother' would suggest that within the Muslim context of this period, gender was based on identifying 'gender' as a: 'binary variable in which sexual difference is viewed as being determinant in the construction of Woman and Man, and, as such, they become static, a-historical categories' (Sardenberg 2007 :55).

²⁰ Correspondingly it would also have placed a greater obligation on men to marry and produce more 'Muslims' and to assume all financial responsibilities for the care and up-keep of the family unit as prescribed by Islam.

It would also suggest a second gender construction was also operational during this period, one which was then based on: 'dichotomised roles...which emphasise[d] sexual divisions and impositions of feminine and masculine roles' (Sardenberg 2007:55).

Furthermore, this narrative identity of wife and mother was then placed on all Muslim women of that time and all time,²¹ and, as such, both the actual construction of the narrative identity and its design as a singular narrative identity was then fixed onto Muslim women, at this time. This not only reduced 'Muslim women' to a singular narrative identity, as religious women, but it also created a category of Muslim womanhood which has also become static within Islamic discourses.

This narrative identity of 'wife and mother' essentially then marks a valorising within the Muslim context of this narrative identity construction as part of Islamic canon²². Moreover, this narrative identity became the Islamic ideal(ised) view of Muslim womanhood in that period and has travelled through the ages to be viewed as the normative model of Muslim womanhood.

Muslim womanhood was socially constructed by Muslim male scholars and leaders of the period, so all other models of womanhood were then contested. This model of idealised Muslim womanhood is said to be the one utilised within Islamic fundamentalist discourses (Tohidi, 1991; Moghissi, 1999).

²¹ The prophets wives are referred to as umm al-muminin – 'mothers of the believers', although Khadijah was the only wife to have had children by prophet, and Mariah, his concubine.

²² Based on male interpretations of the Quran therefore it is seen as God's Law.

The Construction of Muslim Womanhood – the Marginalisation of the Historical Muslim Woman From the Public to the Private

This narrative identity through its assumptions of ideal womanhood as wife and mother, is marked as the defining moment when Muslim women who had previously been active agents within their communities and in shaping their own lives²³ in the pre-Islamic period; and those in the Islamic period who had played a key and often defining role in the shaping of the Divine Revelations²⁴, were increasingly being marginalised. Firstly, at the material level: social, political, and economic; and secondly; at the ethical level: as the doors to *ijtihad*²⁵ became increasingly closed²⁶ to Muslim women by the 10th Century (4th Islamic) (Barlas 2002:31). This would suggest a third approach to how gender was constructed within this period; a 'translation of cultural systems, in which men and women are seen to live in separate worlds, emphasising differences which are created with the socialisation process' (Sardenberg 2007:55).

²³ Khadijah was a merchant and employed Muhammad; she also proposed marriage to him. There are several examples of women who proposed marriage to and chose to divorce Muhammad.

²⁴ Umm Salama, a wife of Muhammad, is said to have questioned Muhammad as to why women were not addressed as part of the Divine Revelation, after which 'women' were included (Barlas 2002:20). There are also examples of women were combatants on the battlefield and as medical helpers during key battles lead by Muhammad. The battle of the 'Camel' was led by Aisha. Muhammad's marriage to Zaynab was said to have prompted the 'veil' verses.

²⁵ Defined as 'critical thinking'- and an important part of interpreting the Quran.

²⁶ However, it is worth noting that closed did not mean fully excluded (it does not account for hidden or buried knowledges or informal knowledges/practices that may have been produced but not included for example rural settings, see Sayeed, A. (2013). Women and the transmission of religious knowledge in Islam, Cambridge University Press.

, Calderini, S. (2022). Women as Imams: Classical Islamic Sources and Modern Debates on Leading Prayer, Bloomsbury Publishing.

As Muslim women moved further towards the private and away from the public, they crucially became removed from the critical debates that were shaping Islam's pragmatic voice during this period. Muslim women were slowly being positioned into the role of the 'other' within Islamic societies and notably were placed outside of the founding discourses of Islam. This (women's) marginalisation has resulted in what Amina Wadud (2006) suggests to be women's marginalisation in the historical developments of Islam's intellectual legacy: 'the '...voicelessness of women during these periods of the development of the Quranic interpretation...has mistakenly been equated with voicelessness in the text itself' (Wadud 1999:2). Indeed, Ahmed (1992:73) suggests that the experiences and religious contribution of Muslim women from the first Muslim community were also hidden from Islamic history and that while it is '...remarkable that women's accounts were incorporated...' within the textual edifice of Islam's central texts, it was however reduced²⁷.

Muslim Feminists Uncovering Hidden Conflicts – The Patriarchal Bias Within Orthodox Islam's Knowledge Production

These texts then encode the manifestations of gender relations and views on women as experienced by those who produced Islam's intellectual legacy during a period within which assumptions about '...gender and about women and structures of power governing the relations between sexes...' have then had an indelible effect on shaping discourses on women/gender in Islam, because such texts are now viewed as '... the core prescriptive texts of Islam'

²⁷ While Muhammad's wives/widows provided the largest contribution of hadiths some estimates suggest that Aisha had over 2000 of those recorded and now part of the corpus of Ahadith those attributed to Aisha now total 300 (Ahmed 1992:73).

(Ahmed 1992: 82-83). It was during this period that fiqh laws²⁸ around family and marriage were constructed. Family and personal law reflected Islam's sexual hierarchy (Moghissi, 1999) and the gender assumptions of male jurists, interpreters, scholars, and leaders, of the period (Ahmed, 1992). The male bias towards specific interpretations and the 'patriarchal conceptions of marriage therefore defined the rights and duties of each spouse' (Mir-Hosseini, 2009 :2).

These rulings formed the canon of Islamic law of the age and for future generations. For Islamic feminist scholars, such as Ziba Mir-Hosseini (2009:2), jurists were then constrained by the gender assumptions of the period and by the social and political realities of the time. Thus 'gender equality' and 'human rights' as conceptualised in the modern era would not have been part of the worldview of previous Islamic (male) interpretations, so asserts Mir-Hosseini.

However, such a view seems problematic because: a) it would suggest that had such concepts been present, the Islamic legal traditions may have been recast in this framework. As discussed earlier, similar such views had been discussed and were rejected within Islamic discourses during that period and: b) it fails to address the problematic nature 'of one's own culture and traditions as problematic' (Moghissi 1999:4), and: c) it is 'transposing' debates from one context to another (Moghissi 1999:4).

Mir-Hosseini (2009) was, of course, trying to make a case for the reform and modernization of such laws, by affirming the view that classical fiqh laws were

²⁸ Are human interpretations of Divine laws.

simply a reflection of historical patriarchal structures and are therefore negotiable.

This would then suggest a fourth gender construction was operational at that period: a 'gender relational category, with an emphasis on power relations' (Sardenberg 2007:55). The arguments offered by Islamic feminists was a call for a 'paradigm shift' in Islamic law (Mir-Hosseini 2009:3). It was a call to address the modern age and by offering a counter-argument to the perceived patriarchal bias, that Muslim/Islamic feminists argued was inherent within historical orthodox knowledge production within Islam. The extent and to what degree such a paradigm shift would be accommodated within modern Muslim states, without moving towards Western ideals and values such as 'democracy', 'rule of law' and 'individuality', began to shape and so became part of the continued debates that re-shaped subsequent discourses. However, for some Muslim feminists critical of the pursuit of a culturally relevant framework, within the Muslim context of the Middle East, as an alternative to (Western) modernity frameworks, was viewed as being dressed to sound 'culturally specific' based on the fear of being labelled as orientalist (Moghissi 1999:10).

Muslim Feminists Uncovering Hidden Conflicts - Power and Knowledge and the Historical Role of the Male Hegemonic Intellectual Legacy

The role of interpretation and the weight given to specific interpretations – such as patriarchal and androcentric – therefore informed and formed the vision of Islam of this period. The consensus amongst Muslim feminist scholars, such as Mernissi (1991) and Ahmed (1992), is that this masculine hegemonic vision of Islam may have had more to do with how the 'elite males' of the period wanted

to define the values and social order of the age, enabling them to maintain and establish 'male-centred societies' with 'differential rights for men and women' (Moghissi 1999:39-40). Islam then provided a framework through which to do this. The result however for Muslim women, within this period, and in later periods, is that they are often seen as '...dual citizen[s]' within these Islamic societies (Feldman 2011:2).

Mir-Hosseini (2006:629) in discussing modern Iran, suggests that Islamic jurisprudence texts – which form the terms of the Sharia²⁹ – continue to treat women as second-class citizens and place women under male domination.

Haideh Moghissi (1999:38) similarly suggests that the role of Islamic legal institutions and practices, through the ages, has maintained within it an overt patriarchal order that limits women's lives in Muslim societies. This would then imply that Islamic legal practices and institutions were not solely based on 'religion' but were socially constructed, and although they were based on Islamic discourses, they were underpinned by gendered discourses, and on the understanding that there was a link between power and knowledge.

Moghissi's (1999) analysis of 'oriental sexuality' suggests that the 'Muslim woman's' sexuality and moral conduct were central to both colonial and Muslim discourses. While the former viewed Muslim women as enslaved to the sexual desires of Muslim men, the latter saw Muslim women's sexuality as the site of

²⁹ The moral code and religious law of Islam based on the Quran – it relates to all aspects of behaviour of the life of a Muslim, both criminal and everyday behaviour. Sharia law is based on broader canon of Islamic teachings based on the Quran, Sunnah, Ahadith and fatwas.

moral decay, which required control by family, community, and the state (Moghissi 1999:20).

For Moghissi (1999:22-23) family and personal law within Islamic societies is a reflection of Islam's sexual hierarchy and places: 'Muslim women in the sexual and emotional service of men, with the framework of marriage as the only legitimate framework for Muslim women's sexual satisfaction'.

POWER AND KNOWLEDGE – THE RISE OF THE CONTEMPORARY EGALITARIAN FRAMEWORK AND THE INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE TO THE ORTHODOX ISLAMIC INTELLECTUAL ARCHIVE - MUSLIM FEMINISTS UNCOVERING HIDDEN CONFLICTS

Authors such as Mernissi (1991), Ahmed (1992), Abou El' Fadl (2001) and Barlas (2002) suggest that androcentric and patriarchal interpretations of the religion gained dominance during the Islamic conquest and that patriarchy was effectively read into Islamic practices and laid down in legal and written texts.

Asma Barlas (2002) points the finger at (male) jurists, legalists and exegetes for placing greater weight on specific utterances taken from Islamic sources, such as the Quran and Ahadith³⁰ and from traditions and percepts of the Sunnah³¹. Wadud (1999) and Abou El' Fadl (2001:270) acknowledge this process, but the latter, more so than Wadud and Barlas, recognises that such determinations could only be so because they found support within these Islamic sources.

³⁰ Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions - legitimacy of Ahadith is highly debated.

³¹ The practices of the Prophet Muhammad

Although the Quran is said to be the only text within the monotheistic tradition to explicitly address women and assign moral and spiritual equality between the sexes (Ahmed 1992:64). Contemporary feminist Muslim scholars (Barlow and Akbarzadeh, 2006; Ahmed-Ghosh, 2008; Hidayatullah, 2014), however, have drawn attention to Quranic verses which create ‘...unambiguous gender hierarchies...’ (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2006: 1491).

For example, Hidayatullah (2014) suggests that there are two broad categories of Quranic utterances in terms of male-female relations: the first category is described as: ‘mutuality verses’, which promote male-female inclusiveness and reciprocity, and the second category, is described as: ‘hierarchal verses’, which endorse male control over women and presume hierarchal male-female relations. These complexities further complicated the role of feminism within contemporary egalitarian interpretations and women’s readings of the Tradition and text. The resulting tensions, especially around definitions of which construction of gender might be best used to frame gender justice within the discursive Tradition, led to additional binaries in the production of knowledge within contemporary feminist debates.

The decoupling of historical patriarchy from and the valorisation of the egalitarian message of the Islamic Tradition

For Hidayatullah (2014) this tension within the text may account for why contemporary Islamic feminist Quranic interpreters often found it difficult to clarify the concept of ‘equality’ within their work. It may also account for why Mernissi (1991) in *The Veil and the Male Elite*, Barlas (2002), and Wadud (1999) all seemingly placed so much emphasis on decoupling patriarchy from

the text by valorising the greater egalitarian message as embodied within the whole Quranic text, over these more '...unpalatable verses' (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2006: 1491).

However, in doing this, Islamic feminist interpreters/exegetes were in danger of doing exactly what they had been so critical of about how male exegetes had interpreted Quranic verses. Where the latter chose to read patriarchy in, the former decided to read around patriarchy, and not, as they suggest, read patriarchy out of the text. This led Ahmed-Ghosh (2008:105) to conclude that notwithstanding the rights the Quran assigns to women and its egalitarian spirit, there remained an underlying message in the Quran which does define a gender order in which there is sexual inequality and 'specific gender hierarchies'. The challenges of constructing and defining concepts around gender and gender justice (within the discursive tradition of Islam) became the site of feminist struggles and debates often played out within the academy.

Contestations within contemporary feminist readings of the text and Tradition

Within the Muslim context during Islam's early development, the interpretation of these gender hierarchies within the text, as discussed earlier, had gendered implications for how Muslim womanhood and male-female relations were then shaped. Thus, the historical view of the construction of gender was one in which women were not seen as equal to men but rather women were viewed as 'complementary' in their roles to men. This construction of gender relations draws similarities between Western feminist theories of 'equal but different' (Ahmed-Ghosh 2008:105).

More significantly, the normativity of this hierarchical construction was generally unquestioned by male scholars in the early construction of male-female relations and gender dynamics (Bauer 2009). As such, efforts to address gender relations, women's roles, and gender justice issues (for example the verse on the permissibility of spousal violence) were shaped within this normative construction of a heteronormative/sexual gender binary model. Consequently, the hierarchical model became the site within which gender justice discourses took shape (Bauer 2009, Bauer 2015). According to Karen Bauer (2009), male scholars in those early periods attempted to formulate justice within the hierarchical model.

The challenges of this historical archival hierarchical construct of gender and the various interpretations around gender justice within the Tradition posed several challenges for women's contemporary readings of the text and the Tradition.

An Islamic feminist reading of the text along hierarchical constructions of gender, particularly the construction of gender dynamics and female-male relations as normatively hierarchical, resulted in various contestations, debates, and the implications of feminist readings of the text and Tradition led to further contestations when debating which route and definition could then be employed in pursuit of reforming Islamic laws/ and devise frameworks for seeking women's liberation within the Middle East context. Islamic feminism and Muslim feminisms discourses are then split between equality and equity (Ahmed-Ghosh 2008:105).

In other words, the Quran, as Divine Speech, and the ontological starting point for addressing the construction of gender and gender justice within the framework of the Tradition and when taken from the text, poses many challenges for contemporary constructions of gender and gender justice. The challenge for women's readings of the text and Tradition and in offering new constructions of gender and gender justice raised questions around the relationship both between the sexes, i.e. male-female relations, and within the Creator-creation relationship.

While Quranic verses do articulate different categories in which male-female relations are played out on the material level, which would suggest that there are multiple and perhaps even competing dimensions to male-female relations, such as at the micro level – the family unit - and at a more macro level – the social/social (gender) order. On the spiritual level, it would seem that there are no differences between the sexes. What is more, the Quran is not just a text that deals with the material and spiritual/ethical level of human life (both male and female) while on earth; it also deals with the human experience as is perceived within the cosmology of Islam, which Wadud (2006:8) defines as the 'Ultimate'. As such all Quranic verses are then regarded, by the faithful, as '...God's own words and, by definition, cannot be doubted' (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2006: 1491).

The (feminist) impasse

This (feminist) impasse results in the need to ask questions as to whether an Islamic framework can deliver gender equality or whether gender equality is wanted. Moreover, how might this impact the construction of gender justice

frameworks, and perhaps, more significantly, whether these terms can be constructed within the impasse? Equally, in working within the discursive tradition and when attempting to work within different intellectual traditions, how might (Islamic/Muslim) feminists and other religious subjects/actors reconcile the historical impasse? For example, Moghissi (1999) argued that Muslim women within Muslim societies do not search for equality³² but equity³³. Ahmed-Ghosh (2008:105) suggested that Islamic feminism is an academic debate, which often fails to consider people's lived realities and the material conditions of Muslim women in Muslim states.

This would suggest that at present Muslim women within Muslim societies have two possible choices if they decide to use an Islamic framework. Either they use the existing male-biased interpretation or the new feminised – female-biased - interpretation, which could be viewed as a more 'ethical' interpretation. Another option may be the need to undertake forms of strategic essentialism (Spivak 1988), to define gender and gender justice in ways that reject, replace, appropriate, or reappropriate concepts and mechanisms which may exclude some groups while including others.

However, without consensus for new interpretations by the orthodox authorities and by Muslim populations, such interpretations may fail to gain legitimacy on the ground. In the modernisation agenda of fiqh laws, the site of sexual hierarchal inequalities within male-female power relations remains a contested

³² Equality refers to equal rights with men.

³³ Equity refers to fairness.

space, but one in which Islamic feminists argue that it is possible to construct gender justice from within the discursive tradition (Asad 1996).

Muslim Feminist Scholarship: Power and Knowledge challenging from the margins of the discursive Tradition

'Islam' is not a monolith, despite its presentation in discourses as such, rather it has '...multiple, contested and coexisting meanings...' (Wadud 2006:5), which are constantly and sometimes violently being negotiated by those within Islam in as much as by those outside of it (Cox & Marks , 2003; Kamrava, 2006; Wadud 2006).

Intellectual Islam was based on dialogue and discourse (Kamrava 2006:11). But the suggestion of the absence of women within these earlier discourses and the privileging, by one group, to claim authority over the intellectual tradition resulted in complex and contradictory meanings of Islam (Wadud 2006).

Islamic feminists and contemporary feminists Quranic interpreters³⁴ were increasingly trying to find answers to contemporary questions particularly those around the woman question through an Islamic framework by engaging at the level of Islam's intellectual legacy. They were challenging the hegemony and privileging of Islam's historical intellectual legacy, which dealt with interpretation and Islamic teachings.

Islamic feminism might be considered both a challenge to Islam's historical hegemonic intellectual legacy and domain, in as much as it is an inclusion of

³⁴ Wadud (1999), Barlas (2002) specifically and who are Muslim women living and working in the West.

subaltern voices into wider debates and discourses on women/gender and Islam (Wadud 2006:8).

Islamic feminism is however a relative newcomer to these existing debates and discourses and their place within it has yet to be accepted and has often been met with a strong and passionate challenge by more dominant voices within the field from both the orthodoxy and more specifically from Muslim secular feminists. This then places Islamic feminism in the role of the 'other' as they find themselves situated in parallel discourses, i.e. within intellectual Islam's two strands: conservative versus reformists; and within Muslim secularist feminists versus Islamic feminists; and feminism versus Islam.

Feminists Uncovering Hidden Conflicts: Negotiating Muslim Feminist Goals from the margins to the centre

Islamic feminism has raised the issue of historical context, which, as discussed earlier, formed part of the founding debates on Islam during the transitional period, but which lost out to orthodox Islam. The question of historical context therefore forms part of the debates, and the methodology used by Islamic feminists, reformists, and critical theorists within Islam when debating some of the more intractable issues within Islam related to women (Wadud 1999; Abou El' Fadl, 2001, Barlas, 2002; Ali, 2008; Hidayattah, 2014).

Islamic Feminists: making a new Islamic Tradition?

Barlas (2002), an Islamic feminist, argues that a 'thematic-historical method' as suggested by critical theorists would help to differentiate the general from the specific within the Quran and assist in 'separating normative from historical Islam' (Barlas 2002:60-61). Ali's (2016) work on *Sexual Ethics and Islam*, which

is a critique of medieval and contemporary commentaries on deeply controversial issues within Islam related to women and male-female relations, concludes that to avoid the current trend of apologetic and polemic discourses around issues such as marriage to minors there is a need to consider the Quran's overall trajectory towards '...fairness and justice...' rather than '... simply doing what 'Islam' requires' (Ali's 2016:156). Similarly, Wadud (1999: 9-10) situates her interpretations in what she describes as the 'Weltanschauung' of the Quran, as a universal rather than a culturally specific text; and one which should be read as a whole text (Wadud 1999:95).

Islamic feminists are part of the reformist movement within Islam, who suggest that Islamic texts, specifically the Quran, which they view as the key text in Islam, should be read from a contextualist perspective and not as previous interpreters did, from a textualist perspective. This they argued would allow for a 'gender-explicit analysis' (Wadud 2006 :2) and open the door to 'gender justice in Muslim thought and praxis – a form of gender mainstreaming' (Wadud 2006:10). Essentially what Islamic feminists are proposing and highlighting is that Islam is a 'multi-layered phenomenon' (Kamrava 2006 :3) and as such the conclusions that are drawn are therefore formed by the definition that is then placed on 'Islam' (Wadud 2006:18).

Islamic feminism is criticized for this, by Muslim secular feminists, for using '...Islam as the engine of history, the builder of identity' (Mojab 2001).

Muslim Secular Feminists: Negotiating a new gendered citizen and political system

For Muslim secular feminists it is the problematic nature of patriarchy ‘...as a system of exercise of male power that is nurtured by the state, religion, class, law, culture and language, media, and other social forces’ (Mojab 2001:131) that is the site of the struggle; which is why they dismiss Islamic feminisms methodology; which they view as simply reinforcing patriarchy (Mernissi, 1987; Mojab 2001). The competing visions of male-female relations, as articulated within the Quran and accentuated by patriarchal structures instituted by Islam, may have accounted for why some women resisted Islam during its transitional period and why some Muslim women during the 19th – 20th century, within Muslim societies, then questioned how far it could help them towards securing their citizenship and rights.

For Muslim secular feminists, women’s rights were not simply about reforming or redefining Islam, rather it is about citizenship, based not on religious law, which they viewed as patriarchal (Mojab, 2001), but on a human rights framework (Mernissi 1987), which must have promised Muslim women more hope of citizenship at that time (Freeman, 2022). Citizenship remains a complex concept but if taken as the ‘...relationship between the citizen and the state within the context of obligations and rights it is then based on the principle of ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusions’ of members’ (Chari 2009:47). Chari suggests two categories of ‘citizens’: ‘passive’ and ‘active’; each has a different role to play with the state, the latter is better positioned to negotiate with the elite for rights; however, as citizenship is often unequally distributed, and is often based on the

position held within social structures, barriers, and limitations to engagement result in differentiated citizenship rights (Chari 2009 :47). For Muslim secular feminists, the use of a framework outside of Islam was then part of the 'active and ongoing negotiations' with the state for rights during the 'modern' Muslim state-building process (Chari 2009:50).

Muslim Secular Feminists: The Modernisation agenda the role of state and religion and the struggle for gender democracy

The point of intersection between Muslim secular feminists' and Islamic feminists' discourses is however more recent, since the 1990s and as such, it comes on the back of deeper debates held by Muslim secular feminists about the best route and definition of equality for Muslim women within different Muslim societies. For Muslim secular feminists, their aim was not to reform or modify the sharia, but to discontinue it...to 'de-shariatize their country's legal and political system (Moghissi 1999:130-131).

For Muslim secular feminists, separation of state and religion and also religion and law would then be the only way forward and the only way in which to deal with patriarchy (Mojab 2001:137). Muslim secular feminists were then arguing for a framework outside of Islam and outside of religious political state structures, which they saw as incompatible with ensuring gender equality (Moghadam, 2002).

Muslim secular feminists were using a model of feminism that recognised that any framework which sustained a sexual hierarchy or implied within it a discourse that constructed 'woman' as a category as subordinate (Mouffee [1995] in Moghissi 1999: 142), could not be a meaningful 'framework for the

struggle for gender democracy' (Moghissi 1999:126). Having taken that position, as the only meaningful route for change in the treatment of women could only be attained if the 'Muslim woman' was then recognised as having full autonomous citizenship (Mernissi, 1991; Moghissi, 1999:142). Only when the 'Muslim woman' was viewed as having 'personhood' would they then be seen as having 'equality before the law and equality in the law' (Moghissi 1999:96).

'A core element in the concept of gendered citizenship refers to the strategy of negation and contestation' (Chari 2009:55). For Muslim secular feminists this then placed them on the battleground between other discourses, which were being played out at the same time, such as Islam versus feminism (Badran, 2008); but also within the debate between modernity versus tradition within the context of Muslim nationalism and the development of 'modern' Muslim states (Kandiyoti 1988) and international frameworks such as the UN Deceleration of Human Rights and the UN Decade on Women (1976-1985) (which will be discussed in further detail in chapter three).

Feminist Uncover Hidden Conflicts: competing Muslim Feminist Discourses

As such Muslim secular feminists were seen as 'elitist' or modernists or as 'white' – their creditability as a 'Muslim woman' and their Islamic identity were questioned. This resulted in some Muslim secular feminists turning towards the Islamic framework for answers to the woman question, especially with the perceived failure of the liberal nationalist agenda and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism (Basarudin 2016) within these Muslim states (Moghissi 1999:135).

For 'Islamic feminists' the Islamic framework offered them a route and a strategy which they thought would be better suited for Muslim women within the region (Moghissi 1999:135, Basarudin 2016). Islamic feminism was then a 'strategy' and a tool by which to work within the Islamic framework itself (Ahmed-Ghosh 2008:108). For Muslim secular feminists, the need to separate the state from religion, and religion from law, also applied to their own identity. They distinguished between Islam as spiritual from Islam as legal and political (Moghissi, 1999:142; Mernissi, 1991). Islamic feminists, however, drew on Islamic identity and accepted the continuation of the Islamic political status quo; and perhaps the failure of secular nationalist strategies (Moghissi 1999:10). Islamic feminism could be viewed as a betrayal by Muslim secular feminists, and this may account for by Muslim secular feminists accused Islamic feminists of dealing in a form of 'patriarchy trading' (Ahmed-Ghosh 2008:100). Muslim secular feminists were less willing to 'bargain with patriarchy' for rights (Kandiyoti 1988).

While some 'believing women' may neither want to escape nor subvert the vision of male-female relations as offered by the Quran (Grewal 2014), as they may view this as part of their bargain not so much with patriarchy but more so with their understanding of submission to God (Mahmood 2011, Grewal 2014) and God's law/justice³⁵ (Feldman 2011), for others, Islamic feminism may provide a framework that does not force them out of their religion.

³⁵ Within Islam the afterlife is more important than life on earth.

Islamic feminists may believe that their use of an Islamic framework might offer religious women ‘...an indigenous language and role model’ (Kandiyoti 1988:5) that not only speaks for them but also to them. It may provide a nexus between ‘...intellectual discourse, strategic activism and holistic spirituality’ (Wadud 2006:2). However, the discourses on Islamic feminism have been held predominately by elite urban women scholars and predominately by Muslim women who live in Western societies, which offer them civil laws that are not in direct competition with religious laws.

Geopolitical Segregation in Multiple Women’s production of knowledge

In development terms, these discourses rarely have the power to change the framework that these discourses are set in. In terms of Islam, it is suggested (by feminist scholars) that mainstream discourses neither easily accept new voices and the male hegemony over the intellectual tradition has always penalised feminist viewpoints (see: Ahmed (1992), for a historical account of how Muslim intellectual feminists have been penalised within Islamic societies Wadud (2006) for her contemporary account). While Islamic feminism does situate itself as a challenge to the Islamic intellectual legacy within Islam, it does not lend itself well to activism outside of this arena and as such, it does not ‘...trickle down to rural women...’ within Muslim societies (De Cordier 2010:7).

Islamic feminism as a route for gaining women’s liberation within an Islamic framework remains problematic. The Islamic framework used within most Muslim states is based on a restrictive text, which is based on a restrictive interpretation, which is based on restrictive personal and family laws that operate to restrict women within Muslim societies. This limits the parameters

within which any discourse can be held and any negotiation for rights must then be framed within this context alone. It is also an essentialist and orientalist worldview of all Muslim women are religious beings (Mojab 2001:142), which therefore fails to take in other factors that intersect Muslim women's lives and narrative identities, such as class, culture, or history (Mirza, 2008; Ahmed-Ghosh, 2008).

Such a reductive focus on Muslim women then creates a universal category based on one narrative construction that of an Islamic identity. According to Moghissi (1999), the adoption of Islamic feminism will result in Islamic feminism being viewed as the only route for women in the Middle East, but it also plays into Islamist and Islamic fundamentalist visions of Islam and Muslim womanhood³⁶ (Tohidi, 1991). While Islamic feminism suggests that it goes beyond the patriarchal model, by arguing that the model is unIslamic (Badran 2008:4), its '... underestimation of patriarchy' (Mojab 2001:131) within the framework has led Muslim secular feminists to dismiss its claims as a legitimate feminist discourse (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2008).

The rejection of Islamic feminism is however an unfair rejection of a critical voice within Muslim feminist discourses, despite its faults, Islamic feminism should not be rejected as 'feminism'. The history of Western feminism has had divergent voices, theories, and methodologies (Beasley, 1999). It is this plurality, this political heterogeneity, this diversity, and these different strategies which have given feminists in Western societies the routes through which to

³⁶ I will discuss this in chapter three of this thesis.

pursue their rights. Within Muslim politics, the vacuum and lack of political heterogeneity, have reduced the number of routes through which Muslim women, within Muslim societies, can pursue their rights or form new identities of womanhood (Tohidi, 1991; Moghissi, 1999).

In the end the dismissal of Islamic feminism as 'feminism' by Muslim secular feminists is also a rejection of all previous Muslim feminist engagement within the Middle East. Muslim feminists have always been engaged with 'feminist activism' within Muslim societies since the 19th and 20th centuries and throughout all Islamic history (Ahmed, 1992; Moghissi, 1999).

Early Muslim feminists also used the Islamic framework (Ahmed, 1992); perhaps in the absence of an alternative route or because it offered them the only route within this period. The current academic re-version of 'Islamic feminism' is then neither a new phenomenon within Muslim history nor Muslim feminism, in as much as Muslim secular feminism or 'feminism' is a Western import (Moghissi, 1999; Badran, 2008).

According to Margot Badran (2008:1) 'feminism and Islam was seen as an oxymoron' by the 'West'; and by Muslims, in the 'East', as a tool of the West. She argues that this then delimited Muslim women's capability of producing a feminism of their own (Badran 2008:1). A form of geopolitical segregation (Agathangelou and Turcotte, 2010) has existed in the production of knowledge, which has often pitted 'intellectual communities against one another and locates them asymmetrically to each other within 'their own' terrain' (Agathangelou and Turcotte, 2010:47). This then leads to 'polarization between different modes and

people who embody feminist work...that foreclose the possibility of solidarity' (Agathangelou and Turcotte, 2010:49).

It therefore limits the possibility of a Muslim feminism that could step outside of the existing often fraught debates which seem to be part of the current terrain. For Muslim feminists, whether secular, Islamist or Islamic; patriarchy is the point of convergence and divergence. As each takes a different route, despite the political and theological differences between these groups, what is clear is that they are all still working within the paradigm of Islam. The type of 'equality' desired may then determine the route followed, as such, while Islamic feminism may offer a route for some religious women; it may not for others, who do not identify themselves by their religion alone. As the debates and discourses in the academic field suggest, these different routes can barely co-exist and are the sites of challenges and contestations within the Muslim academic context; but feminist politics concerning power structures have always been diverse and based on different views. The clash between these Muslim feminists may prove more destructive than productive unless they can find ways to collaborate. Foley's (2004) examination of Malaysia's attempts at hybrid Islamic feminism offers a potential way forward. However civil society activism, in the shape of women's groups, and state complicity in changing laws are rare within Muslim societies (Ahmed-Ghosh 2008). It does however suggest an alternative strategy and the possibility of other strategies, which may be required if Islamic gender activism is to grow and be taken seriously (Tohidi 1998 in Ahmed-Ghosh 2008:110).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I explored the history and evolution of the construction of the concepts of gender and gender justice within the Islamic context. This genealogical examination of the scholarship revealed how Muslim and Islamic feminists revisited Islam's historical past to uncover buried knowledge and discover hidden conflicts within Islam's historical intellectual archive. By doing so, these scholars traced discourses and debates that uncovered the power dynamics, historical forces, and cultural and socio-political processes that contributed to the formation and development of gender and gender justice frameworks within Islamic contexts. This exploration highlighted the contestations and conflicts within these constructions, revealing how patriarchal power dynamics have historically shaped gender norms and justice in Muslim societies.

This chapter specifically focused on two historical periods: Islam's Transitional period and the nascent First Community of Muslims, and Islam's Golden Age, with the establishment of Orthodox Islam. A genealogical examination of feminist debates and discourses during these periods uncovered the central role of patriarchal power dynamics in shaping the construction of gender and gender justice frameworks. The historical tracing offered by Muslim and Islamic feminist scholarship illustrates the relationship between Islamic knowledge production, its intellectual archive, and contestations over gender norms. For instance, the normalization of hierarchical gender binary relations within Islam's intellectual legacy was critically examined, highlighting how these norms have persisted and evolved over time.

Moreover, Muslim and Islamic feminists' resistance to this historical intellectual archive identified a crucial site for new reinterpretations and reimagining of gender roles. These scholars have actively contributed to feminist knowledge production, which is shaping contemporary constructions of gender and gender justice within Muslim contexts. This resistance signifies an important shift, allowing for alternative interpretations and more equitable frameworks to emerge within the discourse of Islamic feminism.

In the subsequent chapter, I will expand on the debates explored here, particularly focusing on the theme of 'the woman question' as a central framework within Muslim and Islamic feminist scholarship. Chapter three will delve deeper into the evolution of constructions of Muslim womanhood and examine the role of different strands of feminism that have influenced discourses on gender and gender justice frameworks within Muslim contexts.

Additionally, I will introduce how geopolitical discourses, including those from Western feminisms within International Development and International Relations, have complicated discussions on gender justice frameworks in Muslim contexts. These geopolitical influences underscore the complexity and multiplicity of factors shaping gender discourses today. Here I will trace how different strands of feminists' voices offer a critical engagement from the margins, including ³⁷Third World, Muslim, and Islamic feminisms which offer

³⁷ While the term Third World Women may be contested in current terms, when these debates and scholarship were presented, many of the scholars identified with this term, and it also forms part of the case to show feminist storytelling and how subjects come to know themselves are part of shifting discourses.

different formations of gender justice frameworks, discourses, and debates, within the Muslim context.

One of the challenges encountered in this genealogical approach has been identifying and defining consistency within concepts such as 'gender,' 'equality,' 'feminism,' and 'Islam.' This challenge is partly due to the contested nature of these concepts but also because of the diversity of sites and plurality of discourses now prevalent in these fields of study (Mir-Hosseini, 2011). In the next chapter, I will clarify how these different definitions are employed and articulate my position within the ongoing debates.

The genealogical exploration undertaken in this chapter underscores the significance of understanding the historical and socio-political processes that have shaped contemporary gender norms and justice frameworks within Islamic contexts. This understanding is crucial for organisations like Islamic Relief that aim to develop faith-based gender policies. The broad remit and tight boundaries of such efforts highlight the challenges that development agencies face in navigating these complex discourses.

In conclusion, the genealogical approach used in this chapter provides critical insights into the historical constructions of gender and gender justice within Islamic contexts. It reveals the nuanced power dynamics and socio-political processes that have shaped these concepts, thereby setting the stage for further exploration in chapter three. By continuing to employ a genealogical lens, the next chapter aims to deepen the understanding of constructions of gender and gender justice through the Muslim and Islamic feminist lens, offering

a comprehensive analysis of how these debates have evolved and their implications for contemporary discussions on gender justice.

3. EXPLORING GENDER AND GENDER JUSTICE THROUGH A GENEALOGICAL LENS IN MUSLIM AND ISLAMIC FEMINIST EPISTEME – PART TWO: NEW DISCOURSES

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I expand upon the themes explored in chapter two by examining how geopolitical discourses and knowledge production have influenced the construction of gender and gender justice frameworks in Muslim societies. Using a genealogical approach, this chapter traces the evolution of these frameworks through two critical historical periods: the colonial to post-colonial era and the post-9/11 context.

The first section of this chapter delves into the colonial to post-colonial period, exploring how colonial powers appropriated feminist discourses, leading to resistance within Muslim societies. During this era, colonial authorities often portrayed Islam as a hindrance to modernity, using this narrative to justify their interventions and policies. Feminism became a contested site, as it was perceived as being co-opted by colonial powers to serve their agendas. This appropriation created a backlash against feminism within many Muslim societies, where it was seen as an extension of imperial power dynamics and external interference in local traditions and cultures. This section examines how the colonial production of knowledge about 'the Other' perpetuated binary constructions of religion and modernity, framing Islam as either a resistance or a hindrance to progress.

In examining the post-colonial period, I explore how nationalism, modernity, and nation-state formations influenced gender discourses and Muslim women's activism in these new discourses, as outlined by Ahmed (1992) and discussed in chapter two. The debates surrounding women's rights, gender justice frameworks, and women's citizenship became pivotal as newly independent states navigated their identities and socio-political structures within geopolitical discourses. Within these shifting contexts, the 'woman question' (re)emerged as a central theme, as Muslim societies grappled with integrating women's roles into the national narrative while maintaining cultural and religious authenticity. To contextualize these debates, I provide case studies from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, and Malaysia, offering a geographical analysis that highlights the complex and evolving landscape of gender and gender justice frameworks in these Muslim-majority contexts.

The second section of this chapter shifts focus to the post-9/11 period, examining the enduring legacy of colonialism on gender relations and the global discourse on gender and development. In this context, I draw on Raewyn Connell's concept of the Gender World Order to analyse how global power structures continue to shape gender dynamics. The post-9/11 era has seen an intensification of the discourse framing Islam in opposition to modernity, often positioning Muslim women as victims in need of liberation. This narrative perpetuates the legacy of feminism as imperialism, where Western feminist agendas are imposed on non-Western societies, often through modernisation agendas in International Development and International Relations.

Furthermore, this section explores the role of masculinities in shaping gender relations, using Connell's work on different forms of masculinities to highlight how historical narratives inform present-day realities. The legacy of colonialism has contributed to the construction of hegemonic masculinities that influence contemporary gender dynamics in Muslim societies. By analysing these developments, I aim to demonstrate how historical patterns of power and resistance continued to impact gender justice frameworks. Thereby setting the stage for the empirical chapters (six and seven) in this case study.

Throughout this chapter, I employ a genealogical approach to trace the historical evolution of gender and gender justice frameworks in Muslim contexts. This method allows for an examination of the power dynamics and socio-political processes that have shaped these concepts over time. By analysing both historical and contemporary discourses, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex landscape in which gender and gender justice frameworks are constructed and contested within Muslim societies and Muslim contexts.

I define the Islamic context as related to the historical time of the founding discourses between the emergence of Islam and the precolonial period. Moreover, I situate the Islamic context within the Islamic discursive tradition, when religious knowledge production and nascent internal debates and discourses within Islam were formulated.

I use the term Muslim context as related to the lived experiences of Muslim communities (in Muslim-majority and Muslims in diaspora) grappling with

shifting questions of modernity, wherein Muslim and national identity, politics, and Muslim consciousness shaped new discourses and debates within (feminist) knowledge production on constructions of gender and gender justice. The historical period from pre-colonialism, post-colonialism, and post-9/11, geopolitical, and Muslim modernity dynamics underpin these discourses.

In the previous chapter (two) I focused on the role of patriarchy in shaping the debates and discourses on the construction of gender and gender justice frameworks in the Islamic context. This chapter will now focus on the two remaining broad themes: the role of the woman question and the role of feminism in shaping discourses and debates on women and gender in Islam³⁸. Drawing primarily on Muslim, Third World, and postcolonial feminist literature, this section will examine how Western feminist ideas and the 'language of feminism' (Ahmed, 1992:151) have been appropriated into geopolitical discourses, both in the past and now within more contemporary global politics. Subsequently, this has contributed to the construction of Muslim women's narrative identities, in as much as 'Islamic' discourses have.

In other words, the extent to which 'Islam' (as a 'religion') can be claimed to be both the dominant and only framework in which Muslim women's narrative identities³⁹ have been constructed is questioned and challenged, through

³⁸ In the previous section, I had focused primarily on 'Muslim women's' narrative identity constructions and so I used the term women/gender. In this section, I have separated this as I intend to examine not only 'Muslim women' but also other 'gender' narrative identity constructions, including men, as well as examine 'gender' more broadly.

³⁹ As discussed in the previous chapter, I used the term narrative identity so as to highlight that the notion of a single 'construction' and of a single Muslim women's narrative 'identity' was problematic on many levels, particularly the notion of 'Muslim Women' as a monolith group with

identifying the new sites and discourses within which Muslim women's narrative identities have been constructed.

This section will therefore aim to highlight how Muslim women's narrative identities are constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed within the context of these 'new' (geopolitical and gendered) discourses. In other words, it is the interrelationship between Islamic and Western discourses, which produce the debates on gender, identity, and modernity, which shapes the construction of Muslim women's narrative identities.

These debates are further framed within the parameters of the tensions between various binaries, such as, authentic versus Western and traditional versus modern, and it is through these narratives that the construction is articulated within. This then delimits the possibility of a more nuanced and genuine understanding of Muslim women's narrative identities, as the reductive focus on 'religion' presumes Muslim women's narrative identities are conceptualised only within the framework of religion and gender. This can 'reinforce the straitjacket of conceptualising women as the pivotal territories, markers, and reproducers of the narratives of nations and other collectivities' (Balchin 2003:40).

a single narrative 'identity' – based solely on religion as was the notion of their being a single 'construction' of such a narrative and this was my position at all times. As this chapter now explores the new discourses on women and gender in Islam, I will use the term narrative identities. Furthermore, as this chapter is also taking a historical review of the corpus of the literature, I will continue to use the term *narrative* to present the evolution of: a) the historical 'constructions'; b) the historical 'constructions' of the 'Muslim woman' within the Muslim context and feminist literature; and, c) critique these various narrative constructions as presented within the literature through the body of this review.

In this chapter, what I am advocating is that the process of constructing Muslim women's narrative identities is then 'one of the key fabricating mechanisms through which the social construction of gender takes place' (Butler 1990:186) and the normative heterosexual 'world gender order' (Connell, 1995) is upheld. In other words, Muslim women's narrative identities are deliberately 'constructed' in a way so that the constructed narrative can be used to maintain the gender order not only locally but, as I will discuss, globally. As such this chapter will also explore the literature discussing how the construction of Muslim women's narrative identities has also contributed to the construction of narrative identities for non-Muslim men and women, and for 'Muslim men' at both a local and global political level. At the heart of this world gender order is the struggle for the control of 'power'. While I am not suggesting that '40Muslim women'41 are living a 'false consciousness' what I am, however, is drawing

⁴⁰ While I acknowledge that the use of a term like 'Muslim Women/an' may serve to reproduce the broad category, which I am challenging at the level of narrative identities and is then perhaps inadvertently 're-Orientalising' Muslim women as a homogeneous category, it is in part due to the absence of another more helpful analytical category that I use it. Another reason for its use is that I have drawn a parallel with Bayat's (2007:2) discussion on the use of the analytical category 'Muslim societies'; in which he suggests that the analytical category 'Muslim societies' should be understood, in contrast to 'Islamic societies', as '*plural and concrete entities...*' this then 'allows a self-conscious Muslim majority to define their own reality in an inevitably contested, differentiated, and dynamic fashion' and not as the latter is viewed, by others and Islamists, in '*singular abstract forms...*in which Islam is the central factor'. I will therefore use Bayat's (2007) definition when I discuss Muslim societies within the context of this piece.

⁴¹ In the previous section I discussed how the category 'Muslim woman/en' had often been reduced to a single narrative identity – that of religious woman based on an Islamic identity. The construction of a single narrative identity is problematic as it reduces woman/en to a single status based solely on 'gender' and narrative constructions of that gender within a religious framework. Furthermore, it is problematic in that it leads to the homogenisation of all Muslim women into a single narrative identity. This has significant implications in terms of Muslim women's position, status and agency – but it also sets the parameters within which discourses on Muslim women are played out. It reproduces binaries and situates Muslim women (women's issues, women's rights and epistemology) within these pre-existing binaries. The section intends to highlight that Muslim women are not just a diverse group within the category 'Muslim

attention to how the literature discussing Muslim women's narrative identities has constructed Muslim women not as a diverse group or even as individuals, but rather, as a collective category, best described as the 'Muslimwoman' (Cooke 2008:91).

The 'Muslimwoman'

In creating the term 'Muslimwoman' Mariam Cooke (2008:91) suggests that Muslim women are primarily identified by this singular identity, which is based on the fusion of two markers of identity - *gender* and *religion* - into one. The Muslimwoman is a compound identity, constructed not by Muslim women, but, by others, such as Islamist men or non-Muslims and they have constructed the Muslimwoman as one who is veiled (Cooke 2008:91). Muslim women's bodies are the mechanism through which different ideologies, various identities and different discourses are being socially performed against and through, both within the Muslim context and also outside of it. In other words, Muslim women's narrative identities are the symbolic marker through which the 'self' and the 'other' are constructed and then socially performed. That is to say, if the Muslimwoman has been created by others; 'it is Muslim women who must be The Muslimwoman. They must play the part' (Badran 2008 :101 emphasis in original).

woman/en' but that they constitute, what Steven Vertovec, S. (2007). "Super-diversity and its implications." Ethnic and racial studies **30**(6): 1024-1054.

Vertovec (2007) terms, super-diverse (while Vertovec's term is used in relation to migration and as a need to look beyond ethnicity – I am using it in reference to highlight how multiple variables have impacted on Muslim women).

This is not to suggest that Muslim women are pawns, without agency or consciousness, but that they are often used as pawns within a wider gendered political performance. Consequently, it is the *abstract* constructed narrative that is employed to lay claims to and to justify political projects, but it is 'Muslim women', whether they identify with this marker or not, whose *concrete* material conditions and lived realities are most impacted on. Muslim women are caught within this grand performance and have to make sense of their lives within this framework. As such, narratives around Muslim women's identities (and especially their rights) which continue to be situated primarily within the reductive framework of religion (whether from within or outside) are then problematic in that: a) it reduces all (Muslim) women (regardless of whether they view themselves as 'Muslim' 'believers' 'religious' or 'non-religious') within Muslim societies (and also now for those living in non-Muslim societies - in diaspora) to this one homogeneous category i.e. 'Muslimwoman' (Cooke, 2008); and, b) it fails to enable this construction to be problematised, thereby reducing the potentiality for a more nuanced debate or understanding of the lived realities of (Muslim) women; further reducing the potential for new discourses and new epistemologies from developing.

Consequently, the debate on 'Muslimwoman' is always held primarily within the framework of religion. Moreover, it is understood within two polarised viewpoints and (Muslim) women are caught between the two, the result is that any activism is viewed as a betrayal or as an imposition of (feminist) westernisation (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2008). The failure to recognise or to take into account (Muslim) women's lived realities or perhaps more importantly, how they define their

reality, has meant that the normative constructions of Muslim women's narrative identities must be viewed as '*fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means' (Butler 1990:185 emphasis in original) so that Muslim women are 'reduced to a simplistic and judgemental interpretation' (Ahmed-Ghosh 2008:112) wherein, they have to define their reality within the context of these discourses (Cooke, 2008; Ahmad, 2008; Zine, 2008).

Starting first with a critical discussion on the role of knowledge production and the construction of the 'other' in shaping discourses, I will examine how the construction of the 'other' in line with the language of feminism influenced Muslim nationalist discourses through an exploration of nationalism and state-building in Muslim societies, before finally exploring how feminism as imperialism⁴² has impacted on gender identities and development discourses about Muslim women. I will primarily locate this section to the period covering the 1970s -1990s as this era is characterised as the postcolonial period and is perhaps when postcolonial (scholarship) discourses were most vociferous. Furthermore, it was the period when Muslim nationalist discourses and Islamist discourses⁴³ started to gain ground within Muslim societies; this in turn

⁴² Defined as feminism having been co-opted to pursue (neo)imperialists objectives.

⁴³ The term 'Islamist' has come to refer to the idea of 'over religiosity' based on the idea that the modern world was once distinguished based on 'the religious and the nonreligious' but in current thinking this is now based on differentiating between 'the religious and the *more* religious' as such, this term is then sometimes interchanged with other terms such as (Islamic/Muslim) fundamentalism, revivalism, conservatism, fanaticism, or extremism' but it can be applied to all religions (Bayat 2007:1). In this section, as with other terms, I will employ these different terms as they have been employed by the authors, in part this is to keep with the authors' usage and meaning, but also to highlight how different groups view the particular version of Islam that is suggested as the framework for the discourse they are working in. This

impacted Muslim women's material conditions within these Muslim nation-states, which in turn shaped Muslim women's activism and feminisms within this context. This period also saw fevered international feminist activism, as it coincided with the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985) and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995).

I will limit my discussion to the broad themes of the woman question⁴⁴ and feminism(s), because they are the '...common context of struggle' (Mohanty 1991 :7) for Muslim women. By drawing on different geographical and individual national experiences within the Muslim context, I hope to illustrate what Shampa Biswas (2002 :184) has described the 'simultaneity of the homogenizing and heterogenizing thrusts of globalization in the late twentieth-century world', to highlight the entrenchment of the binary process, which keeps the discourses alive. I will draw on more recent scholarship when discussing how these discourses have been replayed in the period after 9/11 and

is important as terms such as '[f]undamentalism have become a catchword in popular and social science use, mainly but not only in the West' which is why Pieterse, J. N. (1994). *Delinking or globalisation?*, JSTOR.

(1994:2) asks 'who does the discourse serve' – which is what this section looks to question.

⁴⁴ I am applying the term 'woman question' on the same basis as Ziba Mir-Hosseini (2002:74) has in relation to Iran and gender politics. She claims that the 'woman question' entered the political discourse of Iran during the 20th century alongside the emergence of Iran as a nation-state. It was during this period that the pattern, battle lines and positions between traditionalist and modernist were then drawn in relation to women's rights. Women's rights were identified with secular discourses and modernism, while those who avoided the issue fell back on religious and discourse and traditionalism (ibid). Furthermore, the 'woman question' draws attention to two crucial elements of this gender politics: a) it is the space within which women's rights were discussed but more importantly it highlights how women themselves rather than the 'woman question' was at the 'heart of the battle'; and, b) that it was the space within which Iranian/Islamic gender biases were critiqued (ibid). This pattern can be observed throughout the various examples I will discuss in this chapter – making this a useful category through which to examine Muslim women's narrative identities and women's rights.

interweave this discussion into these two themes as a means to draw together the third theme of the homogenizing and heterogenizing process.

The above three key themes will intersect throughout this chapter and while I have attempted to draw attention to how these themes have contributed specifically to the new sites within which Muslim women's narrative identities have been constructed, because they are interrelated there will be some inevitable overlapping between the different topics and areas discussed. It is this interplay between the new discourses, which although seen separately, as a whole have then contributed to the entrenchment of the binary discourses within which reductive gender narratives and identity politics have now come to dominate the current political landscape. This is problematic as it leads to essentialist narratives and reductive frameworks, which will only further reduce women to their bodies and delimit the routes through which they can express their identities and gain rights.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: COLONIAL TO POST-COLONIAL PERIOD

From the 16th to 19th century the three remaining Muslim empires, the Ottoman, the Safavid, and the Mughal, began to suffer from political and economic complications, which created an opening for European domination. As these Muslim empires declined, European countries grew in both economic and political power, which alongside advances in technology and new intellectual discourses paved the way for what became the European colonial period. European colonialism covered much of the geographical land that was once viewed as part of the 'Muslim world', many of these areas were once described

as 'Third World'⁴⁵ countries. This period also marked the break-up of Islam's political unit - the *Ummah* (the holy community - united under various rulers but united under Islam) - and in its place colonial rulers created new territorial states and boundaries, which paved the way for new discourses around nationalism and nation-states (Nasr, 2000).

According to various Muslim commentators, (Nasr, 2000; Biswas, 2002 ; Jad, 2007 ; Mernissi, 2009) concepts like nationalism were considered as new within the Muslim context and introduced Western discourses that were based on Western ideas and values around individualism modernity and secularism. These new discourses were juxtaposed with 'traditional' Islamic discourses and not only re-shaped the geographical, political, and economic social order of the Muslim world, it also re-shaped discourses on the 'Muslim woman' by inextricably linking Muslim women's narrative identities to these nationalist discourses. Subsequently, the tensions created between these competing discourses resulted in a nexus between women, nationalism, and modernity.

⁴⁵ Terms such as First/Second/Third and Muslim World are based on the dualist model of organising the 'world' and its 'people' and are therefore problematic terms, as such, these terms are open to disruption and their meanings change over time. The term the 'Muslim World' for example was constructed in opposition to Christendom – which is a term that is hardly ever used, yet the term Muslim World is still employed, despite there being no unified Muslim World. There is however a large body of literature within International Relations (IR), particularly, which uses the binary framework of Western secularism/Eastern fundamentalism (Biswas 2002:185-186) to maintain the saliency of such terms particularly when explaining global politics. In Development literature, as in IR, terms such as First/Second/Third and Muslim World are often employed to suggest segregated and imagined political realities/communities (Anderson 1991) in as much as to distinguish 'developmentalist trajectories and modernisation narratives' (Biswas 2002:185). But for Bulbeck (1988) such terms are problematic because they fail to account for the uneven distribution of resources and experiences of different groups of people within the First/Second/Third World and so she suggests the notion of fourth and fifth worlds to be operational. I am therefore applying these terms in relation to how they have been most commonly employed or as employed by individual commentators in relation to their work, unless otherwise stated.

These new discourses were overlaid onto previous religious (Islamic) discourses on Muslim women (Ahmed, 1992)⁴⁶. As a result 'Muslim women' became the battleground on which colonial, anticolonial and neo-colonial discourses were, and are still, being played out as a means of legitimising political and strategic ideologies by both the 'East' and the 'West' (Kandiyoti, 1988, 2007; Mohanty, 1991; Ahmed 1992; Moghissi, 1999; Viner, 2002, Jad, 2007; Hunt, 2010).

'Colonial Feminism' and the shaping of geopolitical discourses

Central to these discourses was the use of Western feminist ideas, particularly the language of feminism (Ahmed, 1992). The language of 'feminism-as-imperialism' (Kandiyoti 2007:197) and more specifically that of 'colonial feminism' (Ahmed 1992:151) in shaping geopolitical discourses were first appropriated within the colonial period. This in turn shaped nationalist discourses within the Muslim context and has subsequently been replayed within more contemporary geopolitical discourses. It is the ebb and flow of this discourse, which is 'central to 'boundary drawing' and 'identity fixing' practices' (Steans 2010 :84) at a geopolitical level which is played out in gendered terms, effectively through Muslim women's bodies as the central narrative, which I will now focus on.

⁴⁶ As discussed in the previous section in relation to narrative constructions and the construction of Muslim women's narrative identity/ies. This section will attempt to highlight how those founding discourses are replayed within new discourses. In other words, new discourses are not solely based on Islam's encounter with the West but some of these issues are central to Islam's internal discourses and the experience with the West results in the replaying of these debates, often towards violent ends for Muslim women.

Colonialism, Colonial Feminism and the production of knowledge: The construction of the 'Other'

Leila Ahmed (1992:151) describes 'colonial feminism' as 'feminism used against other cultures in the service of colonialism'. According to Ahmed (1992:151) the 'Victorian male establishment' was unable to accept Western feminists' claims that (white) men were oppressing (white) women in relation to itself, and so 'devised theories' to deride and reject the 'ideas of feminism' at the time. It did, however, recognise the potential to redirect the language of feminism by combining it with the language of colonialism to assist it to further facilitate colonialist agendas (Ahmed 1992:151). Thus, was born the colonial feminist-inspired narrative of *brown women needing to be saved from brown men, by white men* (Spivak 1988). The 'rhetoric of colonialism' (Ahmed 1992:151) was constructed on the notion of male oppression – specifically that the culture of 'brown man' was oppressive towards 'brown woman', who needed to be rescued not only from these brown men but more so from these oppressive cultures. In terms of the Muslim context this narrative was constructed and articulated as 'imperilled Muslim woman' and 'dangerous Muslim man' and the 'civilised European' (Razack cited in Thapar-Bjorkert and Shepherd (2010:266). Thus, this blending of colonial 'male dominance with feminism' became the site for the 'fusion between the issues of women and culture' (Ahmed 1992:151). Furthermore, these narrative identity constructions become normatively constituted through Western scholarship, and so have now gained legitimacy in Western epistemology. This is then the site within which discourses on the construction of narrative identities have subsequently been played out from.

As such, it is now the central narrative rolled out to justify 'interventionist political projects and military campaigns' (Steans 2010:85) and informs development narratives. This narrative is concurrently played out through the master narrative of 'Islam as a threat' (Biswas, 2002) or the 'fear of Islam' (Thapar-Bjorkert and Shepherd, 2010). However, when this discourse is inverted and viewed from the (East) from the Muslim context, the West is the threat (Foley, 2004). Central to the articulation of this normative narrative construction is the dualistic model, in which the notion of the 'self' and 'other' is played out and is employed by different actors towards a specific end. Most often it has been used as a strategy to affirm or reaffirm hierarchal power relations, often in gendered terms. Thus, its employment during the colonial period was used to justify colonial male dominance over the colonised 'other' and to set one ideology against another.

Religion and Resistance

The vilification of the religious, cultural, and social values of Muslim Indigenous people by colonial rulers and Western intellectuals, through the assertion of the superiority of colonial culture, not only shaped Western discourses of 'Islam' in the 'West' but also 'Muslim' discourses of the 'West' in the Muslim world (Nasr 2000 :564-5; Mernissi, 2009). 'Islam' played an important role in the struggle for liberation from colonialism through the mobilisation of '...indigenous anticolonial

movement[s]...[t]hey articulated anticolonialism in the language of jihad⁴⁷ (Nasr 2000:550).

Religion as a hindrance to modernity

According to Vali Nasr, Muslim resistance to colonialism led colonial rulers to view Islam as an obstacle to: ‘...colonial control and efforts to transform the local population’s life and thoughts’ (Nasr 2000:564). The conclusion drawn by colonial rulers resulted in the construction of the narrative that Islam was a ‘problem’ and hostile to progress; that inherent to Islam were particularities that made it inferior; and that colonial culture was the only route to civilisation (Nasr 2000:564). This led to the creation of the following binaries: ‘Islam versus the West’ and ‘modernity versus tradition’ in which Islam and Muslims were placed as the ‘other’ and which cast the ‘West’ as the norm.

Knowledge and Power: knowledge production and the construction of the ‘other’

During this period, armed with these narrative constructions and the hierarchal model of dualism, Western intellectuals in academic fields such as Anthropology established the production of Western knowledge of the ‘other’ as

⁴⁷ Jihad is defined as: ‘to strive or struggle in the service if Islam’ (Ahmed 2011:54). From a faith-based perspective this was generally related to the individual spiritual/faith experience or in terms of a perceived ‘holy war’. In this context it refers to a broader and ‘distinctive and complex understanding of “jihad”’ (ibid) as developed by Islamist groups, and, as part of nationalist discourses within Muslim societies which aimed to awaken a new Islamic consciousness. Ahmed (2011:54) in discussing the Muslim Brotherhood, in Egypt, elaborates how in the context of nationalist narratives “jihad” within this framework had a much more complex meaning and was seen as ‘referring to the duty to wage war against occupying imperial powers’ but, also towards the removal of the ‘inferiority complexes’ within the ‘souls and minds’ of Muslims (ibid). The aim was to awaken the ‘Muslim masses’ to follow the Brotherhoods version of Islam (ibid:53). A version which involved a ‘commitment to productive work; activism dedicated to improving conditions of the Muslim community; and the obligation to speak out against unjust rulers and to demand justice.’ (ibid:54).

legitimate; casting the West as the subject and the 'other' as the object (Spivak, 1988; Mohanty, 1991a; Ahmed, 1992).

This valorisation and the invention of the civilised 'West' could only be possible because of the casting of the 'non-West' as the 'Other' (Harding, 1991:16; Bulbeck, 1998). For Agathangelou and Turcotte (2010:47), this amounted to a form of geopolitical segregation: a set of imperial strategies to control and maintain power, 'that produce[d] distinct divisions and locales of world politics' and 'knowledge formations' (Agathangelou and Turcotte 2010:47-48). The relationship between knowledge and power was employed to further justify colonialism and was then later re-employed within discourses on International Development and International Relations (Agathangelou and Turcotte 2010).

More recently its re-employment has been central to the discourse on the 'War on Terror' (Viner, 2002; Shepherd, 2006; Hunt, 2010). For Biswas (2002) International Relations theorists attempting to explain the resurgence of religion within global politics have also resorted to the tradition/modernity binary, which she claims contains within it 'orientalist anxieties' (Biswas 2002:185). This then draws on what Biswas (2002:185) calls a 'reactive epistemology' that draws on a 'postcolonial approach to the study of global politics' and the 'reproduction of international hierarchies' (Biswas 2002:185). The reemployment of this narrative particularly in terms of the resurgence of religion and political Islam in contemporary global politics (Biswas, 2002; Thapar-Bjorkert and Shepherd, 2010) reaffirms how central this narrative is when examining how Muslim women's narrative identities have been constructed and particularly when it is contextualised with the question, who do these narratives/discourses serve?

Western feminism and the construction of the 'other' woman

Although much of the literature from the colonial period has been critiqued by postcolonial critical thinkers and postcolonial feminists/scholars as both ethnocentric and androcentric (Said, 1978, Spivak, 1988, Bulbeck, 1998; Ahmed, 1992) and as class-based politics (Mohanty 1991; Agathangelou and Turcotte 2010); the legacy of this knowledge production within Western and Western feminist scholarship is significant. Western (white) women's scholarship/feminism not only contributed to the existing discourse by casting 'Muslim women' and 'Third World Women' as the 'other', in which the 'other' became the object of analysis, while they (Western women) assumed the role of the subject. It then validated and accentuated existing knowledge production about the 'other' through the same 'male/female dyad' (Parpart 1993:443) and this was all through the use of a feminist lens (Mohanty et al, 1991; Bulbeck, 1998; Agathangelou and Turcotte 2010).

As such, Western feminists purporting to place women as the 'subject rather than the object (other) of analysis' (Parpart 1993:443) and in attempting to recover 'women's voices and the development of knowledge from the standpoint of women' (Parpart 1993:443; Harding, 1987) had failed to recognise 'differences among women themselves'. Furthermore, '[f]eminist theory 'explained' women as if the reality of white western middle-class women applied to women from all classes, races, and regions of the world' (Parpart 1993:443).

Post Colonial feminist critique of Western feminism and resistance to Western feminism

For Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1991b: 52) 'the effects of various textual strategies used by writers which codify Others as non-Western and hence themselves as (implicitly) Western' was then the mechanism through which Western feminism/scholarship created 'Third world woman as an undifferentiated 'other' oppressed by both gender and Third world underdevelopment' (Parpart 1993:444).

Thus, having fought to ensure that the category 'woman' is included in knowledge production, Western feminist scholarship went on to reproduce the category of the 'third world woman as a singular monolithic subject' within 'Western feminist texts' (Mohanty 1991b:51). For Mohanty (1991b) feminist scholarship on women in the Third world is not just 'production of knowledge about a certain subject', 'it is a direct and political and *discursive practice* in that it is purposeful and ideological' (Mohanty 1991b:53 emphasis in the original). That is to say, Western feminism nourished the existing hegemonic discourses, while simultaneously serving to provide a comparison between 'Western feminist self-presentation and Western feminist re-presentation of women in the third world' (Mohanty 1991b:74).

The construction of this binary, which may have suggested it was an oppositional mode of thinking, is, however, a discourse in which both the 'West' and the 'non-West' become two sides of one coin and is therefore relational, in as much as an oppositional pair. Furthermore, they are interdependent, as each then gives meaning to the 'other' and the 'self' and therefore, each must define

and re-define its 'self' to the 'other' (Mohanty, 1991b). While colonial feminism was explicitly employed to create male dominance over the colonised 'other man', Western feminism, simultaneously constructed a hierarchy in which Western feminism and Western models of womanhood were seen in dominance over Third World women and 'other' feminist discourses (Mohanty 1991b; Parpart, 1993).

The discourse of the 'veil' is perhaps an example of how this interdependent and relational discourse was played out (during the colonial period), both in terms of its impact in how it had contributed to the construction of Muslim women's narrative identities, but also to how it had concurrently shaped Western white women's narrative identities (for specific examples see ⁴⁸Bulbeck⁴⁹ [1998]). The key conclusion to be drawn from the varied examples that Chilla Bulbeck (1998:33) highlights in her work is that it reaffirms the interrelatedness of women's narrative identities and how the boundaries between both 'colonised' and 'colonising' women's constructions of themselves and the 'other' woman were dependent on the standpoint of the 'self'. In the Muslim context, Rebecca Foley (2004:55) for example has highlighted how the 'Muslim woman' has been contrasted both with Western woman (as the moral decay of their society – and the West) and, also, in terms of an idealised Muslim woman narrative (culturally relevant – Islamic).

⁴⁸ who provides a number of examples from different country contexts and over different time periods.

⁴⁹ page 28-33 for a detailed discussion of different experiences

For Mohanty (1991b:74) the '*discursive* self-presentation...[of]...[u]niversal images of the 'third world woman' (the veiled woman, chaste virgin etc), images constructed from adding the 'third world difference' to 'sexual difference,' are predicated upon assumptions about Western women as secular, liberated, and having control over their own lives (emphasis in the original). From the Western perspective, this is seen as the model for women's liberation for all women (Mahmood 2011).

However, as Ahmed (1992:128-129) argues, Western feminists and Western women are not expected to abandon their entire Western heritage or adopt another culture to become liberated, whereas for Third World women and specifically for women within the Muslim context, any improvement in their status can only come about through the abandonment of their culture. This standpoint makes use of Western culture, Western feminism, and the 'West' as the lens through which to define the 'other' and the 'self'. The result of this particular standpoint is a form of hegemony in the production of knowledge about 'others' against which it (the West) has built mighty conceptual and institutional fortresses' (Harding 1991:16; Agathangelou and Turcotte 2010), and against which all narratives about the 'other' or 'other woman' were/are now constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed through⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ see Butler, 1990 for gender; Mohanty et al 1991 for Third World Women; Harding, 1991 for knowledge production; Bulbeck, 1998 for Feminisms; Kirmani 2009 Kirmani, N. (2009). "Deconstructing and reconstructing 'Muslim women' through women's narratives." Journal of Gender Studies **18**(1): 47.

for Muslim women in the context of India women).

This hegemonic relationship between knowledge and power works in tandem with segregated geopolitical discourses, not only to homogenise categories of people and ideologies but also to cause fragmentations within discourses. As a result, there are now tensions between First and Third World feminist discourses (Agathangelou and Turcotte 2010; Foley, 2004; Para-Mallam, 2006); and between Muslim feminist discourses (Zia, 2009; Foley, 2004) and even when feminists have come together, there have been divisions within global and transnational feminist networks (Moghadam 2010 :295) because of the continued notion of the dominance of the Western paradigm.

Western feminism having served to affirm male dominance outside the borders of Western societies during colonialism, has then reaffirmed Western hegemony of knowledge production about the 'other' and more specifically over Third World women. This has had a significant impact on development and geopolitical narratives; moreover, it has also shaped nationalist narrative identities within Muslim politics.

Nationalism: The emergence of 'modern' Muslim nation-states and Muslim women's relationship with/to the 'state' within the Muslim context

The role that 'Islam' has played in influencing Muslim politics both during the European colonial period and more so, throughout the state-building period of the newly formed 'modern' Muslim states, post-independence, has been based on the tension between 'modernity versus tradition'. Biswas (2002:186) suggests that the 'modernisation paradigm' was based on 'secularism as a progressive marker of a progressive modernity' and that 'religion' within this modernisation paradigm, was often viewed as problematic.

Nationalist discourses, within the Muslim context, which began as a struggle for liberation from colonial rule, then gave way to internal debates on whether state-building should be based on secular liberal nationalism or on an Islamic identity – the battle for a ‘Muslim’ political identity in these emerging ‘modern’ Muslim states continued to be played out through the narrative of modernity versus tradition; a legacy of Islam⁵¹, but, also one which was now framed within colonial and anticolonial discourses. The woman question became the site of this tension and the fulcrum on which the struggle for dismantling or moving towards theocratic ideologies often turned on, within these emerging Muslim states (Kandiyoti, 1989; Tohidi, 1991; Bulbeck, 1998; Nasr, 2000). These debates and discourses are increasingly dominating Muslim states in the contemporary era, as many edge further towards a process of Islamization and ‘fundamentalist’ discourses (Moghissi, 1999). Muslim women within these contexts are caught in a battle between their faith, their nationality, and their gender.

The political significance of ‘Islam’ in terms of the struggle against colonialism and then to anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, and postcolonial discourses⁵² was an influential paradigm during the 19th-20th century within the Muslim context

⁵¹ As discussed in the earlier section in terms of whether Islam, after the death of the Prophet Mohammed would be ‘traditional’ or ‘progressive’ a debate that continues within Islam, in as much as it does in relation to global politics.

⁵² I am using/borrowing from Silva’s (2004:11) discussion on ‘postcolonialism’ as non-hyphenated rather than ‘post-colonial’ as something which is “post” or after colonial’. Postcolonial/ism is: ‘an always present tendency in any literature of subjugation marked by a systematic process of cultural domination through the imposition of imperial structures of power’ (taken from Misha and Hogde [1993:339] in Silva Silva, N. (2009). The gendered nation: contemporary writings from South Asia, SAGE Publications India.

[2004]).

(Mernissi, 2009; Nasr, 2000). 'Islam' was/is⁵³ often the master narrative within debates and discourses about nationalism⁵⁴; on nation building; and, on defining national identity⁵⁵ and national culture⁵⁶ within (these) Muslim societies.

Muslim Nation-States and Muslim Women's Activism

The process of establishing the 'Nation'⁵⁷ alongside 'state'⁵⁸ sovereignty within these emerging new 'modern' Muslim nation-states and more broadly, within global politics, was/is often shaped by debates and discourses around 'Islam versus the West'; 'modernity versus tradition'; and local and global discourses on 'gender'⁵⁹. Muslim women's rights were/are often concomitantly debated with nationalist discourses as such, women's rights; their position; and participation as 'citizens' were/are often shaped by these discourses. In other words, 'official constructions of nationhood and the place accorded to women within state

⁵³ Although this section will primarily situate itself within the historical period of the 19th-20th century I will use the past and present tense because: a) I want to point out that nationalist/national identity and state discourses are not static but are continuous processes and that; b) this process has, within the 'Muslim World', been uneven and subject to wider global political interactions. What is more, such processes have, as I will show, often been subject to development agendas, both internal and external.

⁵⁴ I am using Anand Anand.D (2010). "Nationalism." Shepherd, Laura J., ed. Gender Matters: A Feminist Introduction to International Relations. Routledge: 280.

definition of nationalism: as the 'ideology that a nation should have a state of its own or at the very least have a right to self-determination.

⁵⁵ I am using Anand's (2010:282) definition of national identity: as 'those aspects of culture that are seen as central to what brings people together as a nation'.

⁵⁶ I am using Anand's (2010:282) definition of national culture: as a 'strong overlap between a nation and a culture'.

⁵⁷ I am using Anand's (2010:282) definition of nation: as 'shared commonality that is recognised and can be mobilised politically – culture, common language, history...religion...etc'.

⁵⁸ I am using Anand's (2010:282) definition of States: 'are the political actors...who claim to represent a nation.

⁵⁹ I am using gender to denote both men and women and predominately heterosexual interpretations as this is the normative view held within most discourses and the literature (whether implicit or explicit)

discourse[s]’ (Kabeer 1991:39) During the early 19th and 20th centuries, these new nation-states, shaped Muslim women’s status within these societies.

In addition, it shaped the framework and the space within which Muslim women’s activism could be debated and their relationship to and with the state. In other words, the degree of citizenship accorded to Muslim women depended on how these new states negotiated power, religion, the level of their Islamic identity with national identity and their position within global politics/economics.

Modernity and Revisiting the Woman Question

In the early 19th century, elite Muslim male intellectuals⁶⁰ within countries such as Egypt and Turkey, began to critically examine what they saw as important issues to their society, such as nationalism and national advancement, and political, social, and cultural reforms (Ahmed 1992:128). It is here that women’s liberation, within the Muslim context (as opposed to colonialist discourses *about* the Muslim context), first resurfaced, according to Ahmed (1992). In the early 19th century, elite Muslim male intellectuals began to debate the ‘treatment and status’ of Muslim women within the context of their society (Mubarak 2022), advocating reforms around issues such as polygamy and divorce, for women’s education and, for ending the veil (Ahmed 1992:144). These reforms were tied to the modernisation agenda and were often framed within the same narrative construction as used by colonial rulers and were therefore viewed as the:

⁶⁰ Ahmed uses this term in her work, I have chosen to use it here as it highlights an example of the multiple patriarchal voices that have shaped the discourses on how Muslim women have been constructed by men, primarily by men of privilege, in both the Muslim context; and, by both Muslim men and Western men. Indeed, later when women began to enter the discourse this too involved ‘elite’ women, where Western or Muslim. A key point it that the discourse of Muslim woman’s narrative identities is often based on the intersection of class and race.

‘native voice of the colonial thesis of the inferiority of the native and Muslim, and the superiority of the European’ (Ahmed 1992:155).

Ahmed’s analysis of such literature leads her to conclude that these writers not only employed colonial feminism but that they held views which were often patriarchal and misogynistic towards Muslim women (Ahmed 1992:155). These elite Muslim male writers essentially reproduced Western discourses and used the dualistic model to situate Muslim women as the ‘other’ and locate Muslim women as passive objects within the discourse on Muslim women. Put another way, Muslim women within this context were then faced with multiple patriarchies: one indigenous (both an Islamic patriarchy and indigenous cultural patriarchy) and one external (colonial, White/Western – Christian and Eurocentric), which suggests that there was an intersection with class and race, in as much as with religion and politics. By the 20th century, the struggle for liberation from the colonialists had moved forward, towards a struggle for national identity as part of postcolonial nation-state building. Women’s liberation in this period was situated within state discourses as these new Muslim nation-states grappled to establish themselves as ‘modern’ Muslim nation-states (Kandiyoti, 1989; Tohidi 1991; Ahmed, 1992; Bulbeck, 1998; Nasr 2000).

According to Nasr (2000) and Mernissi (2009) the political importance of Islam during the previous colonial period, alongside the formation of post-colonialist discourses, underpinning the wider political and economic hegemony of the West, over these ‘modern’ Muslim states, which were now developing nations, then made it difficult for secular nationalism to take hold as a dominant political ideology within Muslim politics (Nasr 2000). In other words, the political identity

of these new Muslim nation-states was often based on the tension between the concept of nation-state (based on ethnicity, culture, and shared history) and that of the Islamic ideal of the ummah (Islamic/Muslim community) (Nasr, 2000). The formation of a political identity within these Muslim nation-states was then dependent on what Nasr (2000) and Kandiyoti (1988) suggest as the relative strength or weakness of a national identity (cultural Identity). Those with a stronger national identity, for example Turkey and Bangladesh, moved towards a political identity based around their national identity, while those with a weaker national identity, such as Pakistan, moved towards the 'category 'Muslim' as a maker of national identity' (Kandiyoti 1988:5). Yet despite all three being constituted as democracies, the level of 'secularism' and the accommodation of a religio-national identity (Biswas 2002:188) within these countries has been the site of constant tension, as the state negotiates an Islamic consciousness at both a state level and with its citizens (Nasr 2000:555).

Nationalism and gender

Dibyesh Anand (2010:285) in discussing nationalism and gender suggests that nationalism is based on a 'sense of community', which demands on 'occasional sacrifices of the individuality in the greater services of the collective'. However, 'it is a community with clearly distinct expectations of men and women'.

Nationalism is therefore a gendered phenomenon. So, while women assume symbolic importance to such narratives and are often viewed as 'repositories of the nation' (Thapar-Bjorkert and Shepherd, 2010:277) men, however, remain the primary agents of nationalist discourses (Anand 2010: 285).

Anand (2010:285), drawing on the work of Anthias and Yural-Davis (1997)⁶¹, suggests that women's participation within 'ethnic and national process[es]' tends to reduce women to the primary narrative of the mother within nationalist movements.

Repeating essentialist discourses on Muslim Womanhood

While this narrative construction, as discussed earlier played a significant role within Muslim discourses and the early narrative identity construction of Muslim woman, as wife and mother, it also suggests that it is a 'universal' marker of womanhood and is therefore not specific within the Muslim context or to Islam. However, what this might also suggest is that while the notion of nation-states and nationalism may have been new within the modern era of Muslim state-building, the notion of an Islamic nation, i.e. the Ummah, during the Muslim conquests, was also characteristic of nationalist discourses, in which the potential political identity of the Ummah, was based on an essentialist model of womanhood, and may account for why women were reduced to the body. Again, I am not suggesting that this was specific to the Muslim context but rather that the notion of the Ummah within the Muslim context serves the same role of 'nation' and as such, Muslim women's service to the collective is to reproduce. This suggests a homogenising of 'womanhood' and a failure to recognise the possibility of heterogeneous models of 'womanhood' and

⁶¹ See page 285 of Anand (2010) Nationalism for the five major ways in which women have participated in the process.

circumscribes women's participation, status, and role as citizens, as a function of being 'woman', as a biological sex category.

Neluka Silva (2004:35) suggests that essentialist constructions of woman as mother serve to suggest that for a woman 'good' citizenship is synonymous with being a 'good mother' and that the 'boundaries between woman and mother are often collapsed' in nationalist discourses. In this context, Muslim women are not only the repository of 'Islam' but also 'national' identity. Indeed, the two are often conflated. Women are the perpetrators (through their wombs, as 'biological reproducers') and representatives ('transmitters of the culture' and 'signifiers of ethnic/national differences') of the nation, its culture, and its identity and therefore responsible for ensuring that future (male) citizens can take their place (Anand 2010:285-286).

Furthermore, it also frames women's rights within equity rather than equality models. The consequence of this gendered experience is that 'no nation in the world has given women and men the same access to the rights and resources of the nation-state' (McClintock 1993:61 in Anand 2010:285).

In the rest of the chapter, I will explore these themes with reference to specific examples from Iran, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Malaysia. I will also briefly explore why Islamist discourses, with their emphasis on a return to the notion of the Ummah, are gaining ground within the Muslim context.

Muslim women's relationship with/to the 'state': contestations and negotiations for women's rights

'The place accorded to the formal emancipation of women' (Kandiyoti 1988:5) in 'state discourse[s]' (Kabeer 1991:39) is 'central to defining the nature of the state' and 'reveals the politically strategic nature of the 'woman question' (Kandiyoti 1988:5). However, underpinning this is the problematic relationship between the state and 'religion' within the context of modern Muslim states, but this relationship has often hinged on the collective will of its citizens in as much as it has on state ideology and political leadership. What is more, political projects about national identity and the state's 'official constructions of nationhood' (Kabeer 1991:39) and 'state and class formation' (Kandiyoti 1988:5) within Muslim societies have varied and differing histories. These political projects have had 'consequences for both women and Islam and transformed the relationship of each to the other' (Kandiyoti 1988:5).

Case Study: Bangladesh

Naila Kabeer (1991:38) in discussing the emergence of Bangladesh claims the state's initial commitment to the principle of secularism was then subsequently deleted from its Constitution as 'state-sponsored Islamization' began in 1976. By 1988, Islam - as the state religion - was (re)written into the Constitution. For Kabeer (1991:55-56) the tension between the state's attempts to restore Islam as a marker of Bangladeshi nationhood and liberal and secular resistance to it, in which political Islamization was viewed as a denial of the spirit of 1971; created the space within which discourses on Bangladeshi women's rights had been played out. For example, the resistance to official Islamization had helped

to moderate the degree to which the 'state' could use 'Islam' to directly curtail women's rights in this context (Kabeer 1991:56).

Case Study: Pakistan

Afiya Shehribano Zia (2009 :30) highlights Pakistan's Islamization project during the same period and argues that women were made the 'direct targets of a misogynist state', she goes on to suggest that during General Zia-ul-Haq's rule (1997-1988) 'maulvis/mullahs⁶² practically gained state sanction to operate as vigilantes, particularly in enforcing the state prescription of chador and chardevari (the veil and the household) for women' (Zia 2009:30). The result of such state-sponsored Islamization through the use of 'retrogressive legislation on women's rights issues' (Kandiyoti 1988:5) served as a religious and political symbol of Zia ul-Haq's 'Islamicness' (Kandiyoti 1988:5) and by extension, of Pakistan's global political position. Although Pakistani feminists contested these measures through political resistance, which was in confrontation with the state and called for women's rights to be restored within a secular framework, the 'success' of the Islamization process only resulted in fractures within the Pakistani feminist movement. As a result, the 'issues of religious identity confronted activists within the women's movement' (Zia 2009:30), and so consequently, the 'only tool for analysing women in Pakistan is faith-based politics and a woman's acceptance or resistance to expressions of this politics' (Zia 2009:30).

⁶² A Muslim (male) trained in Islamic theology and religious law

Identity Politics, the politics of gender and state politics

The tension within Muslim politics has been about which identity construction should form Muslim political consciousness; a political identity is based on a national identity or an Islamic identity. If viewed through the discourse of women's dress the tension exposes how the construction of national identity and Islamic identity is played out at the micro-level of women's bodies. For example, in Turkey and Tunisia, the passing of laws to ban the wearing of hijab⁶³ in public schools (Thapar-Bjorkert and Shepherd, 2010) was seen as part of their secular reforms. In Bangladesh the state may have resisted or may have 'lacked the confidence' to enforce Islamic norms on discourses of women's dress and behaviour (Kabeer 1991: 38). Unlike in Pakistan (Zia, 2009), where dress was a marker of the state's commitment to Islam (Kabeer 1991: 38).

Case Study: Iran

The example of Iran shows how this tension gave way to an Islamic identity that enabled Islamist movements to construct narratives around Iranian Muslim womanhood and so shape women's relations with the state (Tohidi, 1991; Zia, 2009:30).

The woman question had been a key feature of the Shah's regime, but the model of the 'new woman' put forward was essentially one which echoed 'Western' ideals of womanhood. As the veil (in all forms from simple to chador)

⁶³ The hijab, is the Arabic word for screen/curtain, but is more broadly used within the Muslim context to refer to modest dress for women – it is therefore often used in discussions about 'veiling'.

was abandoned and banned by the state, Western-style dress became instituted as a marker of Iran's modernisation narrative. Iranian women were unveiled; women seen wearing the veil faced state-imposed sanctions, as the police forcibly removed the veil from them (Ahmed, 2011).

These new measures alienated some Iranian women, who felt that this new construction of womanhood did not offer them an alternative model to the 'traditional' models of womanhood, or for whom these models did not create an identity dilemma (Tohidi 1991:257-8). The result was a 'dual value system' (Tohidi 1991:257-8), which caused tensions and dilemmas for all Iranian women. However, the protest against the banning of the veil was most vehemently argued not so much by women, not even by those who wanted it, but more so by the male clergy and then later the working classes.

Consequently, the veil became a political symbol for both sides (the Shah and the Islamists) and Iranian female identity was constructed and deconstructed based on their veiling or unveiling. Islamist ideologies or modern revivalist Islam (Afsar 1994) were then seen as a political alternative to the state (and the Shah's) modernisation ideology, it also offered an alternative narrative construction on Iranian Muslim womanhood (Tohidi 1991:257-8).

In the case of Iran, for women, particularly those from the lower middle classes, the issues over the contested models of womanhood as constructed through the premise of the modernisation process narrative meant they experienced an intensification of inequalities, which left them with few choices (Tohidi, 1991). A mixture of socio-political factors, such as class differences, limited literacy (among women) and the vacuum created within the political system to offer

alternative voices or even feminist consciousness; meant that women from this class particularly fell back on 'traditional roots' for constructing a female identity (Tohidi, 1991:258). Islam offered 'Islamists' (men and women) a familiar vehicle and language through which to struggle for 'liberation' from the Shah's regime (Tohidi, 1991:258).

However, after the Revolution, the new Islamic Republic instigated retrogressive conditions for most women, as restrictive measures were soon imposed on women and the veil, once a symbol and repository of identity, and solidarity against the Shah's regimes, became a marker of the state's confirmation of its Islamic identity (Kandiyoti 1988:7). Thus, the Shah's 'painted dolls' (Kandiyoti, 1988:7) were replaced with the ideal Islamic notion of womanhood, as motherhood.

Haleh Afsar's (1994) analysis of the post-revolution period demonstrates Silva's (2004) argument of the essentialist model of women's good citizenship as being equated with being a good mother, in the service of the nation.

'As the Imam has repeatedly said, good men are raised in the laps of good women. If we follow this example, then we will find our true station in life and recognize that motherhood is a sacred and holy duty for women' (Afsar 1994:17).

However, as the population boomed by the 1980-1990s, religious leaders (now the state) under pressure to manage resources, looked to changing laws to curb the population. Iranian women's groups used this opportunity to address other issues, such as polygamy and maternal rights, and while they did achieve some

small victories in terms of changes to state policies, they had to concede to the veil 'and its imposition in the name of Islam' (Afsar 1994:20).

Zia (2009:29) in the case of Pakistan argues that rationalizing 'all women's rights within the religious framework...exclusively around Islamic history, culture and tradition' is in danger of constructing a debate that 'will be premised on a polarised 'good' versus 'bad Muslim woman'. Such narratives may have more to do with the state's particular version of Islam and how it views the function of women's citizenship and female identity. This failure to incorporate specific demands by 'Third World/Muslim' women's movements during nationalist struggles and the strategic use of the woman question within such struggles have meant that women's liberation and their full citizenship have been compromised and, in some cases, rights have been lost (Tohidi, 1991:260).

In the case of Iran, perhaps fundamentalism can be offered as a simplistic reason for the loss of women's rights, but as Kabeer (1991:43) argues concerning Bangladesh, even in 'secular' Muslim states women who participated in the liberation struggle, 'appeared willing to rely on the good intentions of the nationalist government to represent their interest and remedy social injustices'. However, for Kabeer (1991:43) it is the state's commitment to secularism which created the space within which women's rights could be pursued, even if the state's policies 'towards the 'womenfolk' were narrowly circumscribed'.

Similarly, Zia (2009) about Pakistan, highlights the differences between policy making and the impact that indigenous women's movements can have on

negotiating state policies on women's issues, as also dependent on the level of the state's liberal leadership. She too argues that the space between the military dictatorships of General Zia-ul-Haq⁶⁴ and Parvez Musharraf⁶⁵ and particularly during the leadership of Benazir Bhutto, saw a closer 'cooperation and collaboration' between women's groups, the government of Pakistan, and NGOs (Zia 2009:36).

Thus, for Kabeer (1991:44) secular states provide a more favourable framework within which 'the politics of gender' can be negotiated. The struggle for Muslim feminists, particularly secular Muslim feminists, is the increasing movement within many Muslim states towards more Islamist and fundamentalist frameworks (Tohidi. 1991; Moghissi, 1999; Greany, 2006). This is problematic as it reduces the different routes towards achieving gender equality and results in gender equity being the only strategy for discussing women's rights.

Identity Politics and the Rise of Revivalist Islam and Islamic Women's Resistance to Feminism(s)

However, the allure of a modern revivalist Islam (within the Muslim context) is for some Muslim women an alternative route to the failings of Western feminism, particularly the liberal economic model of feminism (Afsar 1994:16; Pharaon, 2004; Para-Mallam, 2006). Islamist women criticise Western feminism in the same vein as postcolonial feminists once did, as holding a specific standpoint and failing to recognise the heterogeneity of women. Crucially it is

⁶⁴ 1977- 1988

⁶⁵ 1999-2008

criticised for its devaluation of women's role as mothers; Islamist women argue that Western feminism has failed to produce equality but instead has reduced women to second-class citizens (Afsar 1994:16; Pharaon, 2004; Para-Mallam, 2006).

Islamist women are then seeking 'equity' as in equal value with men in terms of contribution and overall equal status within a framework of complementarity, not 'equality' of the sexes (Afsar 1994:16; Foley 2004:60; Pharaon, 2004:357).

Islam as a framework offers this, as within it, it also places a similar obligation on men to conform to the role of 'breadwinner' (Foley 2004:54) at least in theory. However, as in the case of Iran and Pakistan, an Islamic-gendered construction of Muslim womanhood when employed as part of the state's construction of citizenship for women can delimit the parameters within which rights can be negotiated or renegotiated. It also delimits the type of 'feminist' activism that can be employed and renders other brands of feminism of limited value within these debates; thereby leaving only those feminisms which are rooted in religious frameworks and on 'religious identity' (Zia 2009:31).

Thus, the political identity schism within the Muslim context between a national identity and an Islamic identity at the national level is then reflected at the level of feminist praxis and so fashions the type of feminism that is available for women within such contexts to negotiate for their rights. Put differently, in the Muslim context, the state's discourse and its particular version of Islam is the master narrative in which Muslim women have to negotiate their 'women's consciousness' with their own 'Islamic consciousness'.

Case Study: Malaysia

Foley's (2004) examination of Malaysia for example, highlights how religious feminisms are now the main medium through which Malaysian Muslim women advocate for their rights. In the case of Malaysia, the state's 'softer' version of Islam reflected an 'Islamic work ethic', which promoted material success as a means towards defending Islam against the West (the enemy). The developmental narrative employed by the state however still promoted women's primary role within the dominant Islamic discourse of mothers and wives and 'yet able to work when needed in the name of national development' (Foley 2004:59).

The allure of such a narrative is that it recognises women's double burden and also acknowledges the contribution made by women, as mothers and wives, as having equal value to the Ummah (Foley 2004:59-60). Within this context, it enables women's activism to address women's rights within these twin roles. In other words, to 'establish women's rights as mothers and wives' and provide advice on how to balance these twin divisions of labour, that of working outside the home with family duties (Foley 2004:59).

In the case of Iran, Afsar (1994:18) highlights how women's activism in the labour market resulted in the formal recognition of women's unpaid familial duties and as a consequence, their entry into the labour market (based on suitable jobs) was accompanied by various concessions to women's employment status and rights.

The result of such feminist activism within these contexts has been at the level of 'equity' and not 'equality'. Feminist activism in this context is then about bargaining with patriarchy (Kandiyoti 1988; Foley 2004:61). A key criticism of Islamic feminism as noted earlier, is its willingness to do this, but perhaps in such contexts, it is the only way forward. As Afsar (1994:18) explains, compromise is the route through which to claw back lost rights. It is also a way in which to 'retain male support' (Foley 2004:60) in environments 'where the main source of authority is religious' (Greany 2006:345). As Foley (2004:60) notes in her discussion of the equity strategy, '[t]hese women operate within a male-defined and directed discourse and must rely upon men for support. This reliance can mean that ideas and actions are tempered'.

For Moghissi (1999:2) Muslim women, within the Muslim context, are caught between secularist and fundamentalist forces. According to Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi an Islamist scholar (2010: xix) 'Islamic activism in contemporary Muslim societies' is based on the following options: 1) Official Islam – allied with the political elite of the country; 2) Mainstream Islamist movements – who are independent from the state and promote democracy, and 3) Militant Islamist groups – who form the minority but who draw the most attention. The 'complex relationship between the state and religion in the contemporary Arab world' is

one in which an Islamist ulama⁶⁶ in line with Islamist movements⁶⁷ is pitted against the official ulama, which is in line with the state (Abu-Rabi' 2010:xxi).

The battle as to whose 'official' interpretation of Islam, as a political Islam and an alternative model to the world system, will provide the answer to the problems created by the 'schism within the Muslim psyche' (Gabriel, Geaves et al. 2017:2) as a legacy of colonialism and the relative failure of nationalism at a nation-state level⁶⁸, along with the 'polarization' of the Arab world into two warring camps' during the cold war (Abu-Rabi, 2010; xi), is the multidimensional context within which Muslim politics is being played out at both a national level, but also at a global level.

The Legacy of Colonialism on Gender Relations and the Gender World Order

Fundamentalism is a possible 'manipulation of religious identities for political mobilisation' (Thapar-Bjorkert and Shepherd, 2010: 270; Greany, 2006:344). 'Islam' is/has/was then used as an ideology within the Muslim context as it provides/ed an instrumentalist and modernist framework within which to shape new identities in response to crisis periods. Anand (2010:283-284) suggests that the crisis could be due to transformations at either an economic, political, or

⁶⁶ Educated class of Muslim scholars

⁶⁷ Abu-Rabi (2010:x) suggests that Islamist movements are based on the vision of a universal ummah as an alternative to the world system and its exploitation of the Third World and as a challenge to that particular hegemonic world power system. As such Islamism is a movement of the oppressed as a response to the colonialism of the past and a response to modern socio-political issues and not just theological.

⁶⁸ Abu-Rabi (2010:xv) suggests that jihadi groups within Arab societies were 'sent' to battle in Afghanistan so as not to challenge the Arab status quo and so destabilise Arab hegemony and oppression within these societies.

cultural level and what is being called for at such times is an ideology that can construct a 'coherent and bounded political collective that has supremacy over itself, and people believe in this construction'. The notion of the ummah is then an 'imagined political community' (Anderson 1991:5-7 in Anand 2010:283), which permits individuals 'to belong to a solid definable community' (Anderson 1991:3 in Thapar-Bjorkert and Shepherd 2010:268).

In the Muslim context, under colonialism, this 'definable community' had come under attack, as colonialism had imported new ideals and narratives about gender identities and roles, and the formation of gender relations between the sexes, which in turn had changed local gender order(s). As a consequence, gender relations between the sexes, gender identities, gender roles, and gender relationships within indigenous societies were often destabilized (Silberschmidt 2011).

As new gender divisions of labour and gendered identities based on the intersectionality of race, class, and religious hierarchies, become linked to either the 'cultural defence of empire' (Connell 2000:41) or the defence of the indigenous 'Self' (Anand 2010:288) from the 'other'. It sowed the seeds for a 'world gender order'. The result of this saw changes to existing roles and identities for women but equally for men too (Momsen, 2004 ; Silberschmidt 2011).

Gender and Development

While dominant discourses within gender and development from the 1970s had focused on the uneven economic power of women within the development

process notably through the work of Esther Boserup (1970), the focus on the woman question was then based on the modernisation process of development (Baneria and Sen, 1981).

This development narrative suggested that local men and women having previously experienced development trajectories differently, would, if modernisation principles were appropriately applied, result in dismissing the inequalities that had led to the discrimination against and the subordination of women within the process (Silberschmidt 2011:98). While Boserup's work recognised the legacy of colonialism on local women's status she did however suggest that 'cultural prejudices' were to blame for women's marginalisation, and that the overall process of modernisation (as a process) would benefit women as much as it would men (Baneria and Sen, 1981:285).

However, recent more nuanced gender research, which examines men and development (Cornwall et al, 2011) suggests that not all men experience/d development equally. For Baneria and Sen (1981:287) this forms part of their key criticism of Boserup's work. Its narrow acknowledgement that not all men experienced mobility as a result of development trajectories and that the modernisation process was not equal, but that it made 'use of existing gender hierarchies to place women in subordinate positions at each different level of interaction between class and gender' (Baneria and Sen 1981:290).

The colonial discourse the 'West is best' (Ahmed 1992:167) held within it the narrative construction that colonial culture was superior to 'other' cultures, this became part of the justification for colonialism (Mohanty, 1991a; Ahmed, 1992).

However, a nuanced analysis of this narrative construction reveals that this narrative was constructed on more than simply the notion of 'culture' or cultural imperialism, but that central to its construction was the employment of feminist ideas and the language of feminism (Ahmed, 1992).

In the final part of the chapter, I will explore how feminism has been co-opted to pursue both imperialist and development objectives, and how these discourses have shaped discourses on Muslim women.

FEMINISM AS IMPERIALISM AND DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSES ON MUSLIM WOMEN

During the Victorian period, feminist/female consciousness among some Western, 'white', women led to the rise in ideas on feminism. The concept of the 'other' gained currency during this time⁶⁹ as a feminist critique of mainstream social and political thought exposed the inherent hierarchal dualism which was central to Western thought (Beasley, 1999; Ahmed, 1992).

According to postcolonial feminist scholars such as Ahmed (1992) and Mohanty (1991a) the language of the 'other', which was present within Western feminism and anthropology, was co-opted and inverted towards the 'other man' and 'other cultures' (Ahmed 1992:151) by the colonial establishment. Ahmed (1992:151) has described this process as 'colonial feminism' (as previously discussed

⁶⁹ Beauvoir, S. d. (1972). "The Second Sex. 1949." Trans.HM Parshley.Harmondsworth: Penguin.

is credited in the Second Sex (1949) with using the Hegelian concept of 'other' to demonstrate to the construction of women as 'Other'.

concerning narrative identity constructions and Western epistemological hierarchies).

The World Gender Order: The Making of Masculinities

I will now trace how ‘colonial feminism’ contributed towards constructions of masculinities and how this in turn came to shape the world gender order (Connell 1995). It is within this configuration of power relations and gender relations that we begin to develop a richer insight into how Muslim women’s narrative identities have been (re)constructed. Furthermore, it also provides insight into why Western, but also, non-Western feminist discourses are so contested, including why models of ‘equality’ are so problematic, within the Muslim context.

Western feminism had suggested that the dyadic model of the gender order was based on the sex category of male-female and was ‘inherently relational’ (Connell 1995:68) and hierarchical, and, as such, ‘masculinity’ existed in contrast to and with ‘femininity’. However, under its new narrative construction in the service of colonialism (Ahmed, 1992:151) ‘masculinity’ and the gender order took another formulation but retained at its core the same relational and hierarchical model.

This new narrative construction was then presented to suggest that the definition and construction of ‘masculinity’ were also based on the reconstruction and deconstruction of ‘masculinity’ with *other* men. This resulted in the construction of both a ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and of ‘marginalised masculinities’ (Connell, 1995; Yekani 2011:29). Raewyn Connell (1995) asserts

that these different masculinities are neither fixed nor specific to one group, within the colonial discourse it was based on racial and class difference (Yekani 2011:29). As such, white hegemonic masculinity was based on the notion of hegemony⁷⁰ 'as a structural relation' (Yekani 2011:29) and its marker was the 'successful claim to authority...of hegemony' (Connell 1995:77).

Subsequently, within this context, it was based on 'structural inequalities' in which hegemonic masculinity could be constructed as 'men's dominance over women and, at the same time, stress the stratification among men' (Yekani 2011:29) through a world gender order (Connell, 1995; 2000). The 'other man' was part of the oppositional pair to 'White man'.

The 'White man' was superior, and the 'other man' was inferior. The 'white man' was normatively constituted as having higher value in the gender hierarchy of male-male, and, more significantly, in terms of the development of multiple and diverse masculinities (Connell, 2000). This narrative construction held within it a privileging of Western culture (Mohanty, 1991) over the culture of the 'other' (Ahmed, 1992), but, also, of a privileging of hegemonic white masculinity over other types of masculinities, namely Muslim and Third World Men (Bulbeck, 1998; Connell, 2000; 2005; Silerschmidt, 2011; Yekani 2011).

This narrative construction was based on race and class, as well as gender. The gender order was then reconfigured and reallocated from the local to the global and it further marginalised women, by removing them from the global

⁷⁰ Taken from Connell's use of Gramsci's work on 'hegemony' as the claim that a group has a 'leading position in social life' and within any 'given pattern of gender relations, a position always contested' (Connell 1995:76-77).

gender order; as the focus was on the gender relations between men (Connell 1995:76).

Hegemonic Masculinity

Men (regardless of their masculinity status) occupied the 'hegemonic position' in this 'pattern of gender relations' (Connell 1995:76) and women (all) were placed on the periphery. In other words, colonial feminism (Ahmed, 1992) not only assisted in the establishment of relations among different masculinities, such as hegemonic and marginalised, at both a global and local level, but it also contributed to the 'legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women' (Connell 1995:77) at a global and local level. Hegemonic masculinity, though not a 'fixed character type' (Connell 1995:76) does however embody a "currently accepted" strategy:

'When conditions for the defence of patriarchy change, the bases for the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded. New groups may challenge old solutions and construct a new hegemony. The dominance of *any* group of men may be challenged by women. Hegemony, then, is a historically mobile relation' (Connell 1995:77 emphasis in original).

Connell (1995) elaborates and provides a structure for this strategy when the gender order is based on men's dominance over women, in which 'men as an interest group' are 'concerned with defence' and 'women as an interest group' are 'concerned with change' (Connell 1995:82). Drawing on this structure and when applied to the 'colonial feminism' thesis, it then provides the simultaneous

process in which men as an interest group who have been situated to marginalised masculinities seek to defend and reshape those masculinities towards hegemonic masculinity though contesting the hegemonic gender order of other men, but also to women.

Rescued Masculinity

The notion of a 'rescued masculinity' (Agathangelou and Turcotte 2010:54) has been linked to nationalist narratives of the postcolonial and decolonization framework (Agathangelou and Turcotte 2010, Connell, 2000). As Chilla Bulbeck (1998:31) highlights concerning a feminist analysis of the colonial occupation in Algeria, which reveals that Algerian men 'perceived themselves as 'reduced to the social status of women'. Similarly, Connell (2000:48) in discussing 'masculinities of empire' claims that 'the imperial social order created a hierarchy of masculinities' in which 'colonizers distinguished "more manly" from 'less manly" groups among their subjects⁷¹'. The colonial period not only disrupted local gender orders between men and women (Connell, 2000; Silerschmidt, 2011) but it also shaped 'masculinity politics on a world scale' (Connell 2000:52). If the colonial period laid the foundation for how masculinities and femininities were reconstructed from the colonial standpoint; nationalist and post-colonialist discourses are then perhaps the space within which such constructions are/have been reoriented (Connell, 2000).

⁷¹ In the case of India for example Bengali men were seen as effeminate compared to Pathans and Sikhs who were strong and warlike.

Masculine Fundamentalism

According to Connell (2000:53) 'masculine fundamentalism' is seen as a response to gender politics. Connell (2000:53) locates masculine fundamentalism in terms of 'local instabilities of gender' to a world gender order, which has seen a disruption of 'men's local cultural dominance'.

This crisis of masculinity and men's identity narratives may perhaps account for why masculinity is then potentially an 'ideology produced by men as a result of the threat posed to the survival of the patriarchal sexual division of labour that may be viewed as a threat by the rise of modernity' (MacInnes 2001:311). For Connell (2000:53) the reaffirming of 'local gender hierarchies' by dominant groups (men) but whose power is challenged by 'instabilities of gender', at a local level, such as women entering into public spaces, is then through a soft or hard version of masculine fundamentalism⁷².

In the case of hard versions, Connell (2000:53) uses the example of Afghanistan and the Taliban; here Connell suggests that 'hardline masculine fundamentalism goes together with a marked anti-internationalism'. From this viewpoint, the Iranian Revolution could also be viewed as fitting within such a framework, as much as Afghanistan. In the case of Iran, the divide between those who had and those who had not benefited from the 'modernization agenda' saw the Shah's regime as imperialist meddling. The Shah's regime was

⁷² Connell (2000:53) provides non-Muslim examples of both soft and hard versions of masculine fundamentalism, including examples from the USA. As my focus is on the Muslim context I have focused on the example for Afghanistan. Connell does not provide a definition of nor clarification of his particular use of the word 'fundamentalism' which is a contested term, and which holds an implicit and specific problematic meaning within Western discourses of 'Islam' and the Muslim context.

a totalitarian regime, in which there was a political vacuum and where alternative voices were silenced (Tohidi, 1991; Moghissi, 1999). Islamism offered a route to disenfranchised men (traditional middle-class, working class and Muslim clerics) as a way in which to address 'class antagonisms' (Kandiyoti, 1989:7) economic failures (Tohidi, 1991) and possibly challenge masculine hierarchies (Silberschmidt 2011:102) through an indigenous ideology.

The woman question became the central focus through which to address these broader issues, through the narrative of moral and cultural decay as embodied by the model of 'new women', as crafted by the Shah's regime (Kandiyoti, 1989:7; Tohidi, 1991). Drawing on Connell's (2000) notion of the global gender order as a legacy of colonialism, the notion of hegemonic masculinities when read alongside Enloe's (1989) argument that nationalism is born out of a 'masculinised memory, masculinised humiliation and masculinised hope' (Enloe 1989:44 in Anand 2010:287); Islamists' discourses then offered a route to nationalism that was a 'political move to create, awaken, and strengthen a masculinist-nationalist body which is always already vulnerable to the exposure of the masculine as non-masculine' (Anand 2010:287).

THE WAR ON TERROR

Laura Shepherd's (2006:30) work on the 'War on Terror' highlights how the discourse of the war was premised on the 'duality of the masculine and the feminine'. The construction of the 'enemy abroad' was based on the construction of the Taliban as embodying a 'deviant and abnormal' masculinity. This construction was accentuated by overlaying the narrative of Afghan women

as victims, in other words, it replayed Orientalist 'hegemonic discourses' to justify war and 'militarism' in the 'name of women's oppression in Islam' (Moallem 2008:106). This was overlaid through the construction of the USA as a masculine nation; this too was the replaying of Orientalist hegemonic discourses, which feminized the East. The 'masculinism of the nation' resulted in the 'intervention' being framed in masculine terms, rather than as feminist (Shepherd 2006:30-31).

Islamization offers a way for some Muslim men to recapture their masculinity through a counter-narrative to the normative Western world gender order model, which continues to marginalise masculinities through the continued use of masculinity politics on a global scale. 'Islam's' framework for maintaining the monopoly of sex as a virtue of power as natural and god ordained, and as natural difference, simultaneously then enables the defence of patriarchy and men's dominance over women; within the local gender order, it is perhaps also a strategy for maintaining hegemony, while also rejecting western feminism and colonial feminism (Jad 2007; Ahmed, 1992).

In other words, the additional feminisation of Muslim women within national identity narratives, through the use of Islamic narratives as a legitimatising ideology, enables the mirror-opposite masculinisation of Muslim men through the same framework; an 'authentic nativist ideology' (Bayat 2007 :7). This serves to challenge and subvert normative masculine and religious hierarchies in the Western world gender order. It is the reversal of the feminisation of the 'other man' through a non-Western framework, an indigenous and culturally relevant framework. It is both a political and economic alternative to normatively

contested development narratives, such as the modernisation process and capitalism, in as much as it is about reclaiming lost masculinities. 'Islam' offers a framework within which masculinity can be reconstructed and produced as a type of masculinity that keeps Muslim men within the centrality of how normative hegemonic masculinity 'reproduces patriarchy in modern societies' (MacInnes 2001:324).

Masculine fundamentalism may also offer a possible framework within which to understand militant Islamist discourses, as a gradual movement towards examples of hyper-masculinities within militant and violent versions of Islamist activism. The alliance between religion and nationalism to rationalize the use of violence on gendered terms and as part of ethnic cleansing has often been state-sanctioned (Thapar-Bjorkert and Shepherd, 2010) as it was in the case of Bangladesh, by the Pakistani state (Kabeer, 1991; Saikia, 2011).

For Connell (1995:77) the successful claim to authority – in terms of hegemony – while not always through direct violence, it does 'often underpin or supports authority'. The gendered implications for Muslim women are that they then have to deal with multiple patriarchies and multiple masculinities, which are being played out at different levels, in terms of race, class, male power, and geopolitics (Ahmed, 1992; Jad, 2007). The route that Muslim women take as an interest group towards changing and negotiating local gender orders is then shaped by the structure of the world gender order and its particular configuration.

The normative narrative construction of the 'imperilled Muslim Woman' and the 'dangerous Muslim man' when articulated against the 'civilised European' (Thapar-Bjorkert and Shepherd 2010: 266) is not only a powerful narrative construction in maintaining the hierarchical geopolitical segregation of the West against the East and its master narrative of the 'fear' of Islam'; but it 'is a discursive replay of Orientalist representations' (Thapar-Bjorkert and Shepherd 2010: 267). As has been seen in the discourse of the 'War on Terror', it is then the replay of 'colonial feminism' (Jad 2007:178; Viner, 2002; Shepherd, 2006). Western hegemonic masculinity politics is then at odds with and underwrites development narratives which call for 'equality' of Third World and Muslim women. It is the replaying of 'colonial feminism' within development narratives and masculinity politics at the global level that reduces the potential for gender equality frameworks to break out of the West versus the East dichotomy, irrespective of whether it is Western or indigenous-based feminisms (Jad 2007; Ahmed 1992).

See appendix for a discussion on feminism and development discourses – the 'veil' and Muslim women's liberation.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I used a genealogical method to undertake a closer examination of the woman question. This approach revealed the question's political and strategic nature (Kandiyoti, 1989:5), highlighting the complexities involved in the constructions of gender and gender justice frameworks within Muslim and Islamic contexts.

Importantly, Muslim and Islamist feminist scholarship in the context of Islamic and Muslim debates and discourses on the construction of gender and gender justice shows the multiplicity of locations and voices within these debates and discourses (Kandiyoti, 1989). It should also be noted that within Muslim and Islamic feminist scholarship the woman question has been treated as one of 'great symbolic and strategic importance' (Kandiyoti, 1989:5) not only for those who have framed the question but also, according to the scholarship, for Muslim women, who are viewed as pawns within these debates and discourses to legitimise the ideologies of those who control the discourses (Kandiyoti, 1989:5; Mohanty, 1991; Moghissi, 1999; Viner, 2002; Zia, 2009; Thapar-Bjorkert and Shepherd, 2010).

Additionally, for Muslim and Islamic feminist scholars, 'Islam's' place within these discourses has been equally symbolic and strategic. The scholarship suggests that Islam is framed by different voices within these debates as a source of identity and as an ideology. Consequently, the scholarship reveals that Islam is often cast in the role of either the 'problem' (Nasr, 2000; Viner, 2002; Badran, 2008; Thapar-Bjorkert and Shepherd, 2010) or as the 'solution' to the woman question (Mir-Hosseini, 2002; Greany, 2006; Bartelink and Buitelaar, 2006).

As highlighted in chapter one, the sub-field of Religion and Development (RaD) studies employs a similar debate, whereby religion is cast as a hindrance or as a helper (to development). These binary debates, within Muslim and Islamic feminist scholarship and RaD, underscore how the mobilisation of religion within constructions of gender and gender justice may in different and new contexts,

for example, within the field of international development, repeat and reproduce these familiar binary constructions. Indeed, during the 'turn to religion' era in international development donor agencies and international development institutions who had once classed religion as a problem then sought out religion as a potential solution.

In viewing religion as a potential solution, donor agencies issued an invitation to new development actors from FBOs to enter the conversation within the RaD subfield. Similar to (secular/non-religious) feminists, when they entered into international development, new Muslim faith actors in development will be involved in the quest for new (religious) knowledge to seek answers to the woman question in the context of international development (discourses) and not necessarily within the Muslim context or Islamic discourses within the tradition.

That is to say, the construction of gender and gender justice frameworks by Muslim faith actors in development will be discursively constructed within the discourse of development. Whereas Muslim and Islamic feminism(s) gender and gender justice discourses are discursively constructed within various discourses including political, national, social, and within the discursive tradition of Islam.

On the one hand, religious feminisms may seemingly offer new possibilities and strategies for the nexus of religion-gender-development. On the other hand, the implication may be that religion and the mobilisation of religious knowledge might become a handmaiden to development agendas. Unlike Muslim and

Islamic feminist activists and feminist scholars, who sought to answer the woman question within the Muslim context of changing socio-political and economic dynamics at a national level or in response to global discourses (for example post-colonial nation-state building and post-9/11), which had marginalised Muslim women; in contrast, Muslim faith actors in development would be responding to development discourses and international developments call to the 'turn to religion' and the marginalisation of (Muslim) women within development practices/policies.

Moreover, when the subfields of RaD and GaD (Gender and Development) discourses converge within international development, the construction of gender and gender justice frameworks within the Muslim context draws in development actors from the margins of development (for example, Muslim development actors from FBOs within both the Global South and the Global North). These new faith actors within development are expected to support development and modernisation agendas and work within development discourses from below and through an indigenous (religious) framework. This would suggest that these discourses can converge. However, in tracing Muslim and Islamic feminists' (scholarship) debates and discourses in the engagement of social/gender justice within the Muslim context, it becomes clear that far from converging these discourses are coming into conflict and competing.

As I will show in chapters six and seven, providing a solution to the problem of the (Muslim) woman question within international development, Muslim faith actors within this case revisited previous religious discourses whilst trying to construct contemporary constructions and practices. In similar ways to Muslim

and Islamic feminist debates and constructions of gender and gender justice, Muslim faith actors in this case took place within the interplay of managing historical complexities, contemporary geopolitical challenges, and working with contested concepts. These competing sites in which they had to shape practices and policies within the context of the organisation and wider development practices and processes signify how negotiations would need to be discursively produced within historical struggles that would repeat troubled (gender) concepts and carry over normative constructions and concepts that further naturalise previous discourses.

In this chapter, the genealogical approach taken has uncovered how within Muslim and feminist debates and discourses, the woman question as a unit of analysis has significantly shaped constructions of gender and gender justice debates and discourses not only within the Muslim context but also more generally both in the Middle East and within Western knowledge production and discourses. It highlighted how men and women framed and experienced the question differently across different historical periods. For example, within the Iranian context, for Iranian women of all classes, negotiating their gender identity (including, gender relations between the sexes) and their citizenship during the pre-and post-revolutionary period was often intertwined within endogenous debates around national economic and social structural changes and exogenously through international hegemonic power relations from which women were usually marginalised.

Thus, within the Muslim contexts discussed in this chapter, the battle to reconcile an Islamic consciousness at the state and global political level was a

battle that was frequently replicated and paralleled within Muslim and Islamic feminism(s) debates and discourses on the constructions of gender and gender justice frameworks within those contexts. As such, the type of feminism (Muslim secular or Islamic feminism) and feminist activism used within Muslim contexts posed not only a challenge for how Muslim feminism(s) would be shaped in the future, but also raises questions about whether other types of feminism (for example Western-influenced) or even gender justice activism (from outside actors, for example, Muslim development actors based in the Global North) can be coopted, adopted, or operate ever within Muslim-majority contexts in the future.

This poses a challenge for Muslim faith actors who are situated within FBOs/ international development organisations in the Global North but who operate within the Global South. Because of the troubled histories of colonial feminism within international relations and international development discourses, wherein the language of (Western) feminism dominates the practices of gender and development and shapes geopolitical discourses. The very positionality of Muslim faith actors who are based in the UK (the West) and who propose development modernisation agendas that include gender justice practices and policies laced with religious discourses, may be classed as offering secular approaches or that that these actors in development may be imposing religious activism as the only route in these contexts.

Whilst religion is increasingly being employed as a basis for activism by some Muslim women (Foley, 2004; Afsar, 1994), international development has historically operated from the basis of a secular approach. The turn to religion

era within international development threaded within geopolitical dynamics in which UK-based Muslim faith actors operate complicates constructions of gender and gender justice frameworks within the intersection of religion, culture, and (geo)politics.

In Muslim contexts, the rise of 'religious feminisms' (Greany 2006:345) is not only employed within 'fundamentalist' contexts like Iran (Moghadam, 2002) and Pakistan (Zia, 2009), where Islamic feminism is now the dominant Muslim feminism within those contexts, it is increasingly becoming a preferred approach within Muslim countries where the state has taken a 'softer' approach to Islamization (Foley's 2004:57; Eddouada and Pepicelli, 2010; Rinaldo , 2008).

This chapter has explored the key historical moments within the new discourses in the Islamic/Muslim context (the post-colonial and post-9/11 periods) that have shaped gender discourses within Islamic contexts, providing insightful and contextual highlights of how the concepts of gender and gender justice have been both endogenously and exogenously shaped. By examining the intersection of discussions on the (re)interpretation of religious texts, the impact of colonial and post-colonial histories on the construction of gender identities, in light of identity politics, and the role of cultural traditions in shaping gender norms, this analysis has illuminated the complex processes influencing gender discourses.

Foucault's genealogical method proved invaluable for understanding how (gender and gender justice) concepts are constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed over time within the complex history of Islamic and Muslim

contexts (particularly in the Middle East) but through the discourses of Muslim and Islamic feminists in global academic discourses and debates. Unlike traditional historical approaches that seek linear progressions and origins, Foucault's genealogy focuses on the often-messy evolution of ideas and power relations. This method helps to examine the historical context in which concepts emerge, exploring the power dynamics, social forces, and discursive practices that shape their development.

By analysing how different elements interact and compete, the genealogical approach reveals the complex and often arbitrary nature of concept formation, highlighting how what we take for granted as 'truth claims' are often the result of historical struggles, resistance, and (re)negotiations. This perspective allows for the critical examination of the underlying assumptions and power structures that influence the construction of knowledge, shedding light on how dominant ideologies become naturalized.

Consequently, the genealogical approach employed in this research offers reflections on the implications of historical constructions of gender and gender justice frameworks within Islamic contexts. It has demonstrated how these debates have framed broader discussions surrounding different routes and constructions on gender justice frameworks within Muslim contexts, in how it may have shaped the environment in which Muslim faith actors in development may need to operate, especially during the turn to religion era; an era that marked a significant shift in international development approaches, practices and policies in the development sector. Muslim faith actors in development who operated within the UK context were then entering into a space that was

steeped in a contested history but one that is dominated by feminist voices and the language of feminism.

In light of the uncovered hidden discourses within chapters two and three, for example, the normativity of the heteronormative/sexual and hierarchical gender relation binary model within the context of Islamic discourses and Muslim context. Along with dominant binary discourses that underscore and intersect with various debates, for example, the East versus the West, and Islam versus Feminism. What is revealed throughout these genealogy chapters is how contested concepts of gender and gender justice are within debates and discourses in the Muslim context.

In other words, mainstream Muslim faith actors in development when seeking to offer contemporary constructions of gender and gender justice frameworks may be troubled by the role of feminisms and the role of patriarchy. However, as I have shown in chapters two and three, for Muslim and Islamic feminists within Muslim-majority contexts (and in the Western academy as Muslim diasporic communities) these discourses are threaded together. Unravelling or decoupling these two threads from conversations on the construction of gender and gender justice may result in essentialist constructions.

In conclusion, chapter three seeks to provide a nuanced analysis of the geopolitical influences and historical legacies that have shaped gender discourses in Muslim contexts. By examining the colonial to post-colonial period and the post-9/11 era, this chapter highlights the ongoing negotiations and contestations surrounding gender justice frameworks. The case studies from

Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, and Malaysia offer valuable insights into how these debates manifest in diverse geographical settings, contributing to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities for advancing gender justice in Muslim societies. This chapter sets the stage for further exploration of these themes in subsequent chapters, where the focus will shift away from contemporary feminist movements and knowledge production and their impact on shaping gender justice frameworks in the Muslim world and focus on the agentic experiences of Muslim faith actors in development during the 'turn to religion' era within International Development.

4. (QUEER) FEMINISM AND POSTCOLONIALISM: A MAGPIE APPROACH TO RESEARCH

CHAPTER MAP

This chapter aims to: a) set out the ‘thinking tools’ that I draw on to inform this research project, including the key analytical and theoretical concepts through which this study is framed; b) briefly introduce the discourses and debates on ‘gender justice’ as framed within non-Muslim Majority contexts; and c) introduce the specificity of the location within which this study is set.

To do this, the first part of this chapter will begin by way of an introduction, in which, I will broadly thread through the key elements of the thinking tools I will be using in this chapter, and throughout the remaining chapters, by way of a brief discussion/recap of the previous two chapters. The aim is to show how these stories are connected.

In the second part, I will outline the analytical and theoretical concepts that have shaped this researcher's thinking and the empirical/analytical process. Here I will discuss the influence of critical theories and the tradition of critical analysis that has enabled a pick-and-mix approach, this magpie approach allows for a fluidity of thinking to develop a more personalised approach through which to navigate the wonderland of the task at hand (Sim 2014). Some of the theories I am experimenting with include Feminist, Queer, and Post-Colonial (including literary theory), and some of the theorists include Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Edward Said, and Gayatri Spivak. The invitation to experiment in a magpie fashion emboldens me to draw on ‘marginalised knowledge’ and, therefore, I

have at times included analytical and theoretical concepts from within Islam, but more so, the scholarship of Muslim academics who work across various disciplines but who explore a different aspect of religion (Islam) and who are located within Western academia. I draw on the late Shahab Ahmed (2015), Zareena Grewal (2014), the late Saba Mahmood (2011), and Juliane Hammer (2012), amongst others. I also draw on development authors, including Emma Tomalin (2020) specifically her work on the ‘turn to religion’ as I will explore in part three.

In part three, I will focus on the specificity of the location of this research. That to say: starting with the broader exploration of the experiences of religious subjects who live and practice religion, Islam, in the diaspora (the West) and who are involved with the mobilisation of religious knowledge generation and production on the discourses and debates on ‘gender justice’ within the ‘discursive tradition’ of Islam (Asad 1996); I will then gently shift towards the specificity of the experiences of faith actors within an Islamic International Development Organisation (in the UK), who, within the ‘turn to religion’ (Tomalin 2020) narrative engage with international development discourses and the process of the mobilisation of religious knowledge generation and production on gender justice in the field of development and gender.

Believing women and believing men – as religious subjects (and the faith actors)

Before I move on to the first part of the chapter, the overview, I offer the reader a note of guidance; in the above section, I use the term ‘religious subject’. I do

not provide a specific description or definition of this, as I am cognizant of the complexity of experiences that may be part of the subjective experience of a religious subject. What is more, I recognise that this term is also potentially a reductive one, in that it locates the subject within a single category of religious/religion. Rather than define it, I am attempting to work with the term religious subject by way of problematising the analytical category of the Muslim woman. Furthermore, to acknowledge that this project deals with the experiences of 'faith actors' within the context of an Islamic International Development Organisation in the UK, and as I will elaborate in the methodology chapter, my sample included both men and women, who self-identified as practising Muslims. As such, a focus on the experience of a single gender category, particularly in respect of the interlocutors, would not fit with this study. Within the religious world-making of Islam, faith can be understood by the term 'Iman', which literally means faith but also belief. As a term, Iman, within the Islamic tradition has multiple meanings and layers of complexity, which I will not include here, as it is outside of the scope of this project. Rather, my reason for referring to it is to invite the reader to recognise the fluidity that I am working with and the recognition that the religious subject is a believer, as in: 'believing men and believing women' (Quran 33:35) within the discourse of Islam.

I argue that it is important to hold this in mind concerning the complexities within this project and that it is important to recognise that this researcher is attempting to understand that there is no easy way to neatly separate the conversations within the discourse of Islam and the conversations with and within other discourses, such as within development. In other words, when I use

the term religious subject, I am referring to the interlocutors and to any person engaged in religious knowledge mobilisation and production who locates this knowledge generation within the discourse of Islam.

What is more, to not confuse the reader, I also problematise the term ‘faith actors’ a term from within the discourse of development. However, I will be using it and when I do, I do so within the context of the discourse of development. In that, the term faith actor is a term used within development discourse despite ‘faith’ having misleading connotations within development discourses, in that it has ‘little relevance outside of Western Christian tradition’ (Khalaf-Elledge 2021:5).

That is to say, within the context of development discourses faith is considered individualistic and personal and is therefore centred around beliefs and practices, as such, it is suggested that development has engaged with organised religion based on service provision and efficiency and not on the interests of the personal faith dimensions of its beneficiaries (Khalaf-Elledge 2021:5). In other words, I use the term faith actors to suggest that it is a technical role within the context of development and will therefore use it when I am working within the specific discourse of development.

INTRODUCTION

In chapters two and three I focused on the debates and discourses that trace the history of the intersection between women, gender, and Islam within both the Islamic and the Muslim contexts. I explored how the construction of gender and gender justice discourses had been debated through the lens of Muslim

and Islamic feminist knowledge production concerning the Middle East and within Muslim-majority contexts. Feminist debates and discourses held within the academy have been shaped by feminist scholars within both Muslim-majority and Muslims living in diasporas. This genealogy through the corpus of the literature focused on three broad themes: (1) the discourses and debates on patriarchy within the Islamic intellectual tradition, Islamic intellectual knowledge production, and Muslim and or both feminist academic knowledge generation; (2) the discourses and debates on the woman question within Muslim majority contexts, and (3) the role of feminisms in shaping the debates and discourses on constructions of gender and gender justice frameworks.

These debates and discourses were located within global and local settings within Muslim-majority contexts and were further located within international development and international relations discourses. Having drawn on Muslim, Third World⁷³, and post-colonial feminist literature to examine how Western feminist ideas and the language of feminism (Ahmed 1992:151) had been appropriated into geopolitical discourses during specific moments of global politics, I argued that the construction of Muslim women's narrative identities and subjectivity had resulted in situating Muslim women's narrative identities and subjectivity as a singular identity based on the concept of the 'Muslimwoman' (Cooke 2007) and thereby failing to recognise the plurality of identities and subjectivities that operate within the field of lived experiences.

⁷³ I use the term Third-World, aware of the sensitivities of this term. I, therefore, use it in terms of the context within which either the original authors classed themselves as such and that the debates and discourses at the time had been framed within this narrative.

That is to say, the Muslim woman has become an analytical category as an object of knowledge and is devoid of gender and religion, consequentially, it might be possible to suggest that as an object of knowledge, the Muslim woman, as a category, is historically and socially constructed. Moreover, despite the focus on the specific categories of gender and religion, the Muslim woman, as an object of knowledge, is not constituted as a religious subject. Rather, as a category of analysis, the Muslim woman, as a singular narrative identity, and as an object of knowledge is then the basis from which subsequent discourses and debates have been constructed, even when these are authored by new subjects, for example, by Muslim and (western/non-western) feminist scholars/experts who generate knowledge on the Muslim woman subject.

What is more, the genealogies offered (in chapters two and three) revealed that reoccurring themes shape these discourses and debates. I explored these broad themes within the genealogies across different historical points. This trinity: of patriarchy, the woman question, and feminisms, therefore, forms the nexus of gender-Islam-international development/international relations as a discourse. What I attempted to do in the genealogy chapters was to understand how this historically and socially constructed analytical category of 'the Muslim woman' continues to be the object of knowledge.

Here I suggest that it is through the repeating of feminist and orientalist storytelling, that these orientalist and feminist stories result in the construction of Muslim women's narrative identities becoming deployed as a fabricating mechanism through which constructions of gender and the normative heterosexual world gender order were upheld (Butler 1990:186, Connell 1995).

What is more, I argue that these debates and discourses repeated various violent hierarchies (Beasley 1999) and binaries resulting from and having been shaped within the discourse of Orientalism (Said 1978).

There are two troubling aspects to these repeating Orientalist and feminist-infused violent hierarchies and binaries:

- a) They continue to perpetuate the heterosexual world gender order as the normative model through which to understand gender, as I have argued in chapter two. Thereby failing to recognise that gender is socially constructed and is, therefore, not fixed but, rather it is, fluid (Beasley 2005, McCann and Monaghan 2019). Thus, when working with the concept of gender, as an empirical category, a failure to recognise the social construction of gender can result in reproducing certain forms of limitations through delimiting new ways of understanding a phenomenon or reproducing narrative constructs that repeat themselves as a result of not working with 'unfinished conceptual specifications' of gender (Neilson 2021:760). Queer theorists and those who use queer theorization to explore gender and sexuality within the context of non-religious and religious subjectivities (Butler 1990, Yip 2005, Rahman 2010, Shannahan 2012, Seedat 2018, McCann and Monaghan 2019), have offered new ways in which to uncover and identify how the exclusion and the silencing of voices of those who might be classed by the Gramscian concept of the 'subaltern'⁷⁴, are often marginalised and unrecognized as

⁷⁴ The subaltern classes refer fundamentally in Gramsci's words to any 'low rank' person or group of people in a particular society suffering under the hegemonic domination of a ruling elite

having an authentic and authoritative voice or whose agency when engaged in points of resistance and submission within power-relations remains under-understood (Foucault 1978, Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007, Mahmood 2011, Grewal 2014, Yip and Khalid 2016).

- b) That these repeating discourses may have become absorbed into aspects of knowledge production within feminist, postcolonial, international development, international relations, and Islamic discourses. In which, the inheritance of intellectual baggage from the past and to which there remains an attachment in the present (Neilson 2021:760) may constitute a form of 'epistemic violence'⁷⁵ (Spivak 1988). The consequence of repeating these hegemonic ideologies may then block (Neilson 2021:760) new knowledge generation, in which, the authority of religious literacy projects, undertaken by religious subjects, for example, works produced by Muslim women or faith actors within development faith-based organisations and live in diaspora, and, are, therefore, located outside of mainstream/normative centres in which Muslim religious subjects are accepted as authoritative, are then viewed as counter-hegemonic. That is to say, if the subaltern speaks,

class that denies them the basic rights of participation in the making of local history and culture as active individuals of the same nation. Louai, E. H. (2012). 'Retracing the concept of the subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical developments and new applications.' African journal of history and culture 4(1): 4-8.

⁷⁵ Neilson (2021) summary of Spivak concept is the one that I am using loosely here in relation to my discussion on the mobilization of religious knowledge on gender justice discourses by different religious subjects' experience epistemic violence and repeat this: 'epistemic violence refers to the ways colonial reasoning undermines possibilities of an authentic discourse for Indian women. Their double cultural subordination to the ruling alliance of dominant local and colonizing institutions and discourses means the subaltern cannot speak or be heard. The development and expression of their authentic experiential knowledge is blocked and misrepresented in the discourses of intellectuals and researchers who are not only just second-hand observers but who are also themselves imbued with neo-colonial ways of thinking'.

are they heard? (Morton 2003:66) and here I would add, who are they speaking to and for? These new voices in terms of the normative world gender order, may be classed as marginalized subaltern voices, in which their 'experiential knowledge' as the subaltern, may then be labelled as inauthentic, remain unauthorised and even vilified on the basis that it might be positioned as a counter-hegemonic argument or discourse or a form of knowledge production. For example, on the one hand, the exclusion of women's readings and feminist hermeneutical projects within the discourse on gender relations and gender justice within Islam, especially those undertaken by contemporary female religious subjects, who live in the West, may be classed as outside of Islamic orthodoxy by those within the Islamic intellectual tradition. While, on the other hand, it might be valorised because of this perceived positionality to the normative discourse of orthodox Islamic discourses on gender relations. In this case, the conceptualisation of this knowledge generation project as counter-hegemonic knowledge generation is valorised because it is perceived as amenable to mapping onto existing modes of acceptable hegemonic knowledge within a different mainstream discourse, for example, development discourses, may view the perceived 'alternative' as co-optable knowledge in support of development discourses (Bazán, Cuellar et al. 2008), as it serves the 'dominant epistemologies of practice' (Schon 1983:21) within development discourses of progress.

Moreover, repeating hegemonic discourses might result in excluding the experimental knowledge generation of different subaltern voices, for example, those who fall outside of the heteronormative and heterosexual world gender

order, and who may be viewed as too experimental by both types of mainstream/normative discourses and thereby impose limitations on new possibilities to minimise harmful modes of domination (Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007:45) for example, the hermeneutical knowledge generation on queer Muslim religious subjects and identities (Kugle 2003, Yip 2005, Hendricks 2010, Kugle 2010, Rahman 2010, Kugle 2016, Siraj 2016, Siraj 2016).

Equally, I suggest that normative knowledge generation within the Islamic intellectual orthodoxy may be excluded or classed as too religious (Mahmood 2011) on the basis that it is positioned as counter-hegemonic to, for example, the dominant Western feminist discourse of 'gender equality' or the secular development narrative within development discourses, resulting in calls of caution in turning to such discourses (Khalaf-Elledge 2021). In other words, these different forms of knowledge constitute different points of oppression and resistance within a capillary form of power and knowledge (Foucault 1978, Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007).

I argue that taken together, these two aspects become more troubling when the subaltern voices engaged in new knowledge generation in contemporary contexts and who, for example, are seeking to mobilise this religious knowledge (Esack 1997, Wadud 1999, Kugle 2003, Safi 2003, Mir-Hosseini 2009, Hammer 2012, Ali 2016, Ali 2022, Shaikh and Seedat 2022) to address, for example, the gender hierarchical 'impasses' (Chaudhry 2013, Hidayatullah 2014) within the Islamic intellectual tradition and in social and religious practices, which result in harmful modes of domination, such as issues around domestic violence, women's ritual authority, and religious pedagogical knowledge, continue to

reproduce these limitations. First, through the continued use of unfinished conceptual specifications on gender resulting in religious knowledge generation that may repeat violent hierarchies and binaries. Second, the repeating of epistemic violent discourses may then be a form of unconscious assumptions of the inheritance of intellectual baggage (Neilson 2021:760).

That is to suggest that the religious knowledge generation by religious subjects within new locations, as in religion in diaspora, in which violent hierarchies and binaries may be reproduced as familiar violent epistemic discourses might be the consequence of what Michel Foucault (1979) helpfully draws our attention to, his ideas of discourse, knowledge/power, and also the levels of and the process of surveillance. Particularly through the objective of panopticons, which is the 'internalization' of the authoritative gaze (Feder 2014 :58).

Consequently, the religious knowledge generation and mobilisation of this new religious knowledge by marginalised (faith) actors may result in untroubling gender (Butler 1990) and untroubling discourses of Orientalism (Said 1978). For example, in the Islamic intellectual tradition and within communities of Muslims in new and different locations, the pursuit of authenticity and authority, may lead to violent hierarchies, binaries, and Orientalist discourses being repeated. Subsequently, despite the intentions not to be viewed as the handmaidens of Western political agendas, these counter-narratives may re-evolve feminism as imperialism, and the use of essentialism and homogenising categories to construct the discourse.

That is to say, through the construction of a discourse on 'gender justice' perceived silent subaltern voices in seeking to construct a 'just' (Hidayatullah 2014) version and vision of Islam, within the contemporary context, may, have to turn to unfinished conceptual specifications and draw on dominant and marginalised knowledge because of their location within the Occident, but also due to their positionality as the Oriental and their relationship with the Orient.

I suggest the use of discourses and practices that reproduce violent epistemic Orientalist discourses and violent hierarchies and binaries, including the use of unfinished conceptual specifications like gender, confirms the thesis that these religious subjects engaged in the mobilisations of religious knowledge and the construction of a discourse on 'gender justice' are practising a sort of Muslim Orientalism (Hammer 2010, Grewal 2014). I intend to argue that this may go further and constitute a form of Re-Orientalism (Lau 2009 , Lau and Mendes 2011, Salgado 2011, Juluri 2013). In this way, I intend to extend Said's (1978) theoretical contribution to Orientalism.

I intend to undertake an 'ascending analysis of power' as suggested by Foucault to explore the micro-level of society (Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007:37). To understand how these troubling and untroubled epistemic discourses might be 'worked in' and 'worked out' (Ahmed 2015) and to understand the mechanisms of power and how these discourses might be playing out and thereby resulting in a form of Re-Orientalism within the development context. I, therefore, situate this research project within the context of faith actors' experiences of the turn to religion within development (Tomalin 2020).

In exploring how religious subjects approach the mobilisation of religious knowledge within the location of an Islamic International Development Organisation in the UK, situated within the discourse of the turn to religion in development; I intend to examine how these religious subjects attempted to develop a 'gender justice policy. In exploring how these religious subjects negotiated, constructed, and mobilised religious knowledge, in the development of the gender justice policy. I will try to understand to what extent their agentic experiences of dialoguing within the nexus of gender-religion-development might be viewed as an attempt to negotiate the 'impasse' within the Islamic intellectual tradition. And to what extent did the turn to religion discourse within development invite the discourse of gender justice to find new possibilities?

Additionally, in the continued conversation on gender justice within the discourse of Islam, did the discourse of gender and development result in the instrumentation of religion, and the engagement of the mechanisms of (re)orientalism by faith actors within development?

THINKING TOOLS: KEY CONCEPTS INFORMING THIS STUDY

Foucault

I will draw on the theoretical work and the scholarship of those who are drawn to Foucauldian archaeology but more so those who have used the genealogy approach, as I have in chapters two and three, as an analytical tool to examine the relationship between history, bodies, discourses, and power in an attempt to aid the understanding of social practices or objects of knowledge that 'continue to exist and have value for us' (Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007: 32).

I find Foucault helpful to think with differently, although he is not always easy to work with, as others have also suggested (Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007, McNay 2013, McCann and Monaghan 2019), including Edward Said (1986) who is critical of Foucault on geopolitics. (I will discuss Said's critique of Foucault on geopolitics further in this chapter), for now, I draw on Foucault as part of a set of helpful thinking tools to understand the case study within the context of this research. Foucault's (2016) genealogical approach does provide ways to examine ideas around power/knowledge, points of resistance and submission, and ways to examine relations of power between people.

I understand Foucault's exploration and perception of power as one in which the mechanisms of power are productive, and, therefore, power is not repressive and unidirectional but everywhere. Foucault's theorisation about power identified three forms of power⁷⁶, and he argued that within power there was the possibility of resistance. As Ellen Feder (2014:63) notes: '...for Foucault, the very effort of resistance must be understood itself as an expression of power'.

Richard Lynch (2014:19) noted Foucault's understanding of power needed to be viewed as existing within a set of 'force relations'. Lynch (2014:19) claims that Foucault suggested that power must be examined at the micro-level, by looking at local relations of force(s) rather than the macro-hegemonies, that looking at local relations would reveal larger patterns (Lynch 2014:19). When working with Foucault's conceptualisation of power as diffuse, it is helpful to employ the methodology of genealogy, as recommended by Foucault. This was the

⁷⁶ Disciplinary power, sovereign power, and biopower

approach employed in chapters two and three. The same approach will be used to analyse the data in chapters six and seven.

Moreover, this approach is useful in light of the genealogies offered in the previous chapters. Indeed, to avoid the pitfalls of repeating the binaries, violent hierarchies, and orientalist mechanisms as uncovered within chapters two and three, an examination of the case from a micro-level of analysis will provide the opportunity to explore and reveal the force relations and points of resistance that may otherwise have remained hidden. I intend not to apply Foucault as a theoretical explanation but as a methodology, a research tool, to think with and thereby to think differently.

To better understand the macro-hegemonies in this case, I turn to Said (1978). Said's (1978) *Orientalism* offers a more powerful analysis of the structures of Western discourses that represent the Orient and Islam as an object of control and investigation (Yegenoglu 1998). According to Meyda Yengenoglu (1998:14), Said's extension of Foucault's concept of power/knowledge emphasises that Orientalism and Said a) unravelled how Orientalism is connected to Western academic scholarship (knowledge), and b) demonstrates the link between the nexus of power and knowledge and representation (of the Orient).

Said's use of Foucault's understanding of power as a productive nature by which power can induce forms of knowledge and discourse, led Said's analysis to expose the Orient as an effect of a specific formation of power (Yengenoglu 1988:18). In this way, Said's *Orientalism* provides a way to counter Foucault's

failure to ascribe power on modern society as undifferentiated power and recognise the 'force of effective resistance' to power (Said and Hoy 1986:151).

Said's engagement with Foucault's ideas is evident in his analysis of how knowledge and representation are intertwined with power. However, Said extends Foucault's theories by emphasizing the importance of geopolitics and historical context in the creation and perpetuation of these discourses. He critiques Foucault for not sufficiently addressing the role of colonialism and imperialism in shaping global power dynamics, arguing that Foucault's analysis often overlooks the concrete geopolitical realities that underpin the production of knowledge.

The tension between Foucault's and Said's theories largely revolves around the former's perceived neglect of geopolitical considerations. While Foucault's approach provides a broad framework for understanding power relations, Said criticises it for lacking a critical engagement with the specificities of colonial history and its ongoing effects. Said argues that Foucault's work tends to universalise power relations, which can obscure the unique and situated experiences of colonised peoples. This criticism highlights a significant divergence between the two thinkers: Foucault's focus is primarily on the micro-mechanisms of power within societies, whereas Said insists on the importance of macro-level geopolitical forces and historical context.

Additionally, Said suggests that Foucault's theories do not fully account for the resistance and agency of colonised peoples, emphasising the need for an analysis that acknowledges the dynamic interplay between domination and

resistance. Despite these tensions, Said's adaptation of Foucault's ideas has been instrumental in expanding the theoretical scope of postcolonial studies, highlighting the necessity of integrating discussions of power with a nuanced understanding of geopolitical and cultural contexts.

Consequently, Yengenoglu (1988:16) proposes that complications between academic knowledge, the forms of subjugation, and the administration of other cultures can shift the analysis towards an examination of the discursive mechanism of Orientalism and to what can be claimed, recognised, and represented as the 'real Orient' and 'the Orient' and any notion of a real or true Orient, Islam, Arab (Yengenoglu 1988:18).

Chris Beasley (1999:93) summarises Foucault's presentation of power as exercised in action and 'immanent in all social relationships' and, therefore, power is not something that one privileged group of people has or lodged in one location, nor is it 'organised around a singular principle but is multiple'. These different ways of thinking of power, and the relation between knowledge and power, will inform how I intend to explore: a) the religious knowledge generation and production of religious subjects who mobilise religious knowledge within the discourse on gender justice, in particular the feminist/Muslim scholars exegetical and Islamic legal religious mobilisation literacy project, in section three of this chapter, when I discuss Muslim Orientalism, and; b) it will inform the analysis on how faith actors, within this case study, negotiated, constructed, and operationalised the concept of gender justice within the context of producing a gender justice policy, this will be discussed in the empirical section.

Poststructuralist Feminist (queer) Theory

Also, in the empirical section, I will draw on a feminist queer lens to explore how the faith actors negotiated, constructed, and operationalised the term gender within the context of developing the gender justice policy. As revealed within the genealogy, in chapters two and three, the category of gender, as traced across a range of historical contexts, identified some of the sites of tensions and messiness within which the discourses and debates on (Muslim) women/gender and Islam have been framed. Here I suggested gender remained generally untroubled. In this way Muslim/Islamic feminist storytelling maps onto the various waves of Western feminism (Duderija, Alak et al. 2020).

Judith Butler (1990), in *troubling gender*, opens the way to move away from essentialist arguments and to think differently. Queer theorisation (Butler 1990, McCann and Monaghan 2019) offer a way in which to explore the complexity of the concept of gender. Moreover, one of the challenges in exploring and using gender as an analytical category to understand a topic or phenomenon is that when feminist theory is the lens through which analysis is conducted, there is then, an intellectual inheritance of cultural baggage (Neilson 2021:760), which can colour (or fail to colour), reproduce, and/or limit knowledge generation (Collins 1989 , Hemmings 2005 , Hemmings 2011 , Hemmings, Grewal et al. 2011, Mahmood 2011, Grewal 2014, Duderija, Alak et al. 2020, Zakaria 2021) and result in 'epistemic violence' (Spivak 1988).

Feminist Theory

It is here that Clare Hemmings's (2011:1-2) critique of how Western feminists tell stories about Western feminist theory's recent past; highlights how stories

that frame discourses, for example, on gender equality, do so by way of suggesting that they are distinctively a Western export by way of measuring or to enforce democratic or economic development. While this may sit uncomfortably, within feminist storytelling, it then frames 'feminism' as a radical knowledge project firmly in the Western past (Hemmings 2011:1). For Hemmings (2011:2) when feminist stories advocate for a return to a feminist vision from the past, this then proposes that Western feminists construct a 'political grammar that is highly mobile and one that does not only belong to feminists' but, rather, and consequently, that in the global arena, feminism is constructed as the: 'co-optation of feminism'. To this end, Hemmings (2011:2) calls Western feminists to be attentive to what she calls: 'the political grammar of our storytelling' to disentangle ourselves from 'our own stories, narrative constructs, to tell stories differently and to simply not repeat itself'.

In other words, for feminists/activists (or both) and feminist researchers/scholars who come from a Muslim heritage, this intellectual cultural baggage and inheritance from within Western feminism's past can be carried into the present and equally into new contexts.

Firstly, for feminist and or Muslim activists, researchers, and scholars, especially those who live outside of majority Muslim contexts, and trained within feminist theories in Western academies, our training (and I include myself here, as I will discuss in the methodology chapter) has implications on our location and positionality as insiders/outsideers and in how this can shape the research process, analytical process, and knowledge generation, when 'we' study 'them' (Grewal 2014:15).

Thus, as feminist theorists, similar to the dilemma that anthropologists from the West (and I include myself here) have had to negotiate in terms of the intellectual inheritance of the cultural baggage of anthropology (Grewal 2014). The Western feminist and Orientalist stories that shape the political grammar and the stories 'we' tell about 'them' in which 'we' study 'them' (Grewal 2014:15) matter. Grewal (2014:17) observes that the 'native informants' have replaced the 'native anthropologists' in that increasingly, Muslim women within diasporic locations, are called upon as the 'experts' who will explain and translate what the real causes are behind '...the global oppression of Muslim women (Islam)'. I will explore the role of the native informant in more detail in the third part of this chapter when I explore Muslim Orientalism.

It is for this reason, that being attentive to the political grammar of our storytelling (Hemmings 2011:2) requires being conscious of the unconscious assumptions in the intellectual mission of undertaking Muslim-on-Muslim research. Indeed, and as I will discuss in the methodology and research design chapter, Muslim-on-Muslim research, in which the researched and the researcher share an inheritance is still a relatively new field, despite all the feminist scholarship that populates my previous two chapters.

Secondly, as the previous two chapters highlighted, for example, the historicity of the appropriation of the 'language of feminism' (Ahmed 1992) and the discussion of liberation debates over the veil within development and international relations discourses, has left an inimical taste within Muslim discourses and debates over the use of feminisms within Muslims contexts (El Saadawi and Moghissi 1998, Badran 2005, Ahmed-Ghosh 2013).

The debates and discourses, highlighted in chapter two, might be described as the 'Islamic/Muslim feminism wars' as increasing within majority-Muslim contexts the turn to religion narrative (Tomalin 2013, Tomalin 2020, Khalaf-Elledge 2021, Tomalin 2021) resulted in women's consciousness and women's activism aligning with the State discourses, either as a reaction to or as points of resistance to dominations of power relations at local, national, and global levels (Mahood 2011). These rumblings continue, even within contemporary discourses and debates, more so, is this seen with the rise of Islamic feminism (Moghadam 1994, Mojab 2001, Cooke 2004, Abugideiri 2010, Moghadam 2010, Mir-Hosseini 2011, Moghissi 2011, Ahmed-Ghosh 2013, Salem 2013, Seedat 2013, Wadud 2013, Basarudin 2016, Lamrabet 2016, Rahemtulla 2017, Wadud 2021, Mir-Hosseini 2022).

The rise of Islamic feminism as a discourse and activism is a site in which feminist narratives, stories, and storytelling mimic those that Hemmings (2011) identifies within Western feminist theories. In the feminist narratives in chapters two and three, the stories around the themes of patriarchy, the woman question and the role or rather that languages of feminisms, invite a way in which to understand what types of stories are being told through these feminist narratives and feminist theories. These feminist narratives are stories telling 'truths' and making 'truth claims' that are being made to the conversations being held within the context of discourses that are being shaped through the analytical category of gender which by and large remains untroubled by the normative heterosexual world gender order. How they are told and how they are

read, by new audiences, differently, offer clues to how Western feminist narratives and Western feminist theories travel into these new locations.

Furthermore, these new stories provide insights into how these new audiences frame and reframe Western feminist narratives, theories, and unfinished concepts, from one discursive context into another, and the political effects of these stories (Hemmings 2016). Within the context of this research, I argue that these stories can be applied and told differently when Muslim and/or both feminists and Muslim activists or faith actors use or perhaps resist the language of feminism and the stories and narratives therein when they engage with the analytical category of gender in conversation with the language of religion (Khalaf-Elledge 2021) and the language of development.

In this project, I will draw on the work of Clare Hemmings (2016:118) on historiographic and genealogical practice, in the analysis to remember that: 'feminist and queer work seeks to emphasize that all history takes place in the present as we make and remake stories about the past to enable a particular present to gain legitimacy'. In the context of Islamic feminist hermeneutical knowledge generation, Islamic narratives of the past provide a legitimacy to make and remake stories that allow for (present) contextual meaning to take precedents over the past textual readings because they hold patriarchal ways of reading, thus the dialectical movement between the past and present gains legitimacy, if not authority (Rahman 1984, Wadud 1999, Barlas 2002, Chaudhry 2006, Duderija 2011, Chaudhry 2013, Hidayatullah 2014, Duderija 2015 , Lamrabet 2016, Chaudhry 2017, Rahemtulla 2017, Lamrabet 2018, Duderija,

Alak et al. 2020, Wadud 2021, Mir-Hosseini, Al-Sharmani et al. 2022 , Mubarak 2022).

The weaving of travelling feminisms from the 'West' is made and remade to enable different feminist stories to be told, by different storytellers, to search into the archives for buried truths in the hope that when all the facts are unveiled and the story is straight, this 'form of reality' will serve as the 'object of representation in the account that they will' tell (Hemmings 2016:118 citing White, 1978, in Spivak, 1999: 202–3). Here again, Hemmings (2016:118) reminds us that: '[i]n a feminist context, which stories predominate or are precluded or marginalized is always a question of power and authority'. It is this question of power and authority that feminist theorists, especially those who identify as religious subjects, and in their role as native informants are then similar to anthropologists and who, since Edward Said's (1978) seminal work, *Orientalism*, have had to question the inheritance of the intellectual cultural baggage in the study of 'others'.

Orientalism

Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism* established and introduced the term 'Orientalism' as a critical concept, in which Said identified Orientalism as having several distinct and interrelated features. Thus, for Said, Orientalism is first an academic one, as such:

'a]nyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient...is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism...the term *Orientalism* is less preferred by specialist today...[n]evertheless books are written and congresses held with 'the Orient' as their main focus, with the Orientalist

in his (sic) new or old guise as their main authority...[that is to say] Orientalism lives on academically through its doctrines and theses about the Orient and the Oriental' (Said 1978:2 italics in the original).

Second,

'Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between 'the Orient'...and 'the Occident'... [resulting in the acceptance in] the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories...concerning the Orient, it's people, customs, 'mind', destiny, and so on' (Said 1978:2-3).

Third, the

'meaning of Orientalism is something more historically and materially defined than either of the other two...Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restricting, and having authority over the Orient...without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient.. [to this end, Said claimed that:]...because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought and action' (Said 1978:3).

Said (1978:2-3) drew on Foucault's notion of a discourse, which operated alongside the: 'supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imaginary, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles' to argue that Orientalism was produced and reproduced and was a cultural and political phenomenon.

I have deliberately turned to Said's (1978) own words to draw out the key features of how Said, himself, defined Orientalism. My reasons are: First, I take note of Said's (1978:23) description of how Orientalism operates as a system through citing works and authors which others then reference and are influenced by and so come to 'reveal the dialectic between individual text or writer and the complex collective formation to which his (sic) work is claiming that the cited/author is then viewed as having authority' [and thus this becomes part of the foundational discourse from which:] 'any writing or thinking about the Orient' occurs. I recognise in following this methodology I am locating myself and deploying the same tactics of the 'Orientalist' and while this is discomforting, I do this because, similar to Said (1978:15), I am interested in the detail' not the 'gross political verity...that Occidentals are superior to Orientals'. I too, as Said (1978:14-15) had, intend to:

'study Orientalism as a dynamic exchange between individual authors [in terms of this research project, Muslim faith actors' experiences of mobilising religious knowledge within a UK-based International Faith-Based Development Organisation] and the large political concerns shaped by [the development discourses on the turn to religion] (the great empires)....in whose intellectual and imaginative territory the writing was produced'.

What Said (1978) masterfully does here, is locate his study in the specificity of location, temporality, and a specific connection between knowledge and power. In other words, I am also attempting to focus not on the content or the 'simple reflection' within what the organisation generates, but rather, the 'detailed work

within the wide space opened' within the discourse I am exploring (Said 1978:15) within a specific location, temporality, and specific connection between power and knowledge. Here, I draw on Foucault's analytics of 'power and knowledge' in which he conceptualised power based on the relations of power (Lynch 2014:15). Another way to put this is, similar to Foucault, the 'experimenter', I am hoping to '[think] differently' rather than '[validate] what is already known' (Taylor 2014:1).

Second, in using Said's (1978) own words, Said's articulation of Orientalism's key features highlights how Said had constructed his discourse on Orientalism based on his three key features. That is to say, I intend to use Said's (1978) key features framework, by way of a loose framework, to examine this research project, rather than just the conclusion of his discourse on Orientalism.

Furthermore, this project does not focus on the outcome of the programmes or projects or measure the impact of the content of the knowledge-generation project by the organisation and its application of the knowledge they mobilise. Rather, the focus is on understanding how these mechanics play out within the context of the organisation and the discourse of the turn to religion within development.

Focusing on the key features of Said's framework offers a way to think differently. In returning to Said's (1978) own account, I am reminded of Hemmings's (2011:45) analysis of how Western feminist tales of progress stories within feminism often suggest that epistemological shifts, in theory, such as from 'exclusion to inclusion is achieved by a variety of techniques of

comparison and citation', situate black feminist critique as a necessary element in the transformation of Western feminist theory. It is often framed as a legacy, which is premised on the notion of a different kind of object, one 'who inhabits diverse locations'. Hemmings's (2011:46) conclusion makes for difficult reading when she then argues that the critiques of 'women of colour and Third World women are temporally fixed by their frames of citation, becoming tropes in the service of teleology they are no longer the subject of'.

As this study is located in the West and the knowledge generation and mobilisation of religious knowledge production is located within this context, Said's (1978) 'Orientalist' and the 'Orientalist' in this study, occupy different locations, both in time and geography, in as much as, the contemporary period within which Said, himself, undertook his analysis, is then different to mine.

That is to say, the geographical locations and relations of power are now inhabited by a different kind of subject which is less unidirectional and more like a web (Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007, Lynch 2014, Taylor 2014). While Said's (1978) indelible contribution to critical theory has led to the rise of post-colonial theories and scholarship, the Orientalist discourse, is often cited in ways that suggest that progress has been made, and epistemic violence (Spivak 1988) has given way to an unfettering from colonial and post-colonial histories, that we are cognizant of the intellectual cultural baggage of the past and, therefore, we no longer repeat it.

But as Said (1978:7) himself reminds the reader, through his discussion of Gramsci's hegemony, one aspect of Orientalism is how 'culture' operates within

civil society through 'consent' and 'not through domination'. That is to say, according to Said (1978:7), Orientalism's durability is the result of cultural hegemony.

In Said's (1978) discourse of Orientalism, the 'Orientalists' had once been classed as someone who travelled to 'the Orient' to gather knowledge on those whom they had constructed as the 'Other'. According to Said (1978:7 italics in the original), the strategy of Orientalism then depends on a 'flexible *positional* superiority' and had been premised on the viewpoint of the European Occidental and was based on the self-image of the Occident and the West within discursive practices, which rendered others into 'Others' in a constitutive relationship, in which the concepts of 'the Orient' and 'the Oriental' had been constructed and made different to the Occident Self who was the Subject (Thomas-Olalde and Velho 2011re).

In other words, the Orientalists, within the specific discourse of Orientalism had formed inaccurate cultural representations of themselves and of those whom they represented as different to them – this is how Said read Orientalism within the delimits of his analysis of a specific time and location. Said (1978:354) showed us how the strategy of Orientalism worked and how these representations became part of the technologies of knowledge mobilisation and discursive practices within Orientalism as a cultural and political phenomenon.

Another way to think about this is to suggest that the discourse of Orientalism, in as much as Orientalism is a discourse, is now part of the intellectual cultural baggage of various academic disciplines, including Anthropology and other

social sciences, for example, International Development. In that, the 'Orientalist', might now be in the guise of the Western development expert. After all, as Said highlights, the first feature of the Orientalist project is an academic one.

Said's use of Foucault's archaeology of knowledge, in which Orientalism is a discourse, suggests that the inheritance of Orientalism as a discourse and the cultural representations in which the Occident and the West came to know itself as superior to the 'other' had been on the construction of the 'other' as different, inferior, and exotic. Said (1978) located his discourse on Orientalism in the Middle East and in terms of how the Muslim subject was then represented as a kind of object, one who was located in a diverse location (Hemmings 2011). In this way, the representation of the construction of the concept of a 'Muslim World' is contained within the geography of the East, namely, the Middle East (Grewal 2014:6).

According to anthropologist Zareena Grewal (2014:6), this imagined geography outside of the West implies that: first, Muslims live in a world of their own; and second, Islam is an eastern religion that is in a distinct part of the world, a foreign place, where Islam properly belongs. Indeed, Grewal (2014) whose study explores the topic of American youth student travellers who go in search of authentic Islamic knowledge to bring back to the US, views the Middle East as the location of this authentic and authoritative knowledge, in that the Islamic East as Archive (Grewal 2014:115) is home of Islam.

Meanwhile, development discourses rely on the process of knowledge generation and the mobilisation of knowledge to know the development subject. Nora Khalaf-Elledge (2021:3) asserts that developments reliance over the past two decades on addressing religion has been based on outsourcing religious literacy to external partnerships, often with Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs). What is more, it is based on the idea of religion as an isolated category, and that religion is then a unique feature to developing countries (Khalaf-Elledge 2021:3). In outsourcing religious literacy to external partnerships, development institutions and development discourses might be viewed as employing Orientalism's method through which the production of knowledge on the religious subject within development discourses continues to employ cultural representations of differences resulting in 'perpetual cycle[s] of reproducing and deconstructing its own representations' (Grewal 2014:16) in the service of development goals. While development discourses may be recycling and producing and reproducing its own representation as non-religious, and the religious as located within a different geography, the use of faith-based actors within FBOs would suggest that there is a new 'Orientalist' who is again, located in the West, but who is part of a different kind of subject, and one who may be engaged in deconstructing, reproducing, and producing its representations. To put it another way, Orientalism is unfinished.

Re-Orientalism

Lisa Lau (2009:571) in exploring contemporary South Asian literature written in English, and authored predominately by diasporic South Asian women writers,

identified a growing phenomenon that she termed as: 'Re-Orientalism'. Lau (2009:572) describes this development in the following way:

'...Orientalism is no longer only the relationship of the dominance and representation of the Oriental by the non-Oriental or Occidental, but that this role appears to have been taken over (in part at least) by other Orientals, namely, the diasporic authors [thus the process] of Orientalism by Orientals...is [then] the same relationship of the powerful speaking for and representing the other, who is all but consigned to subalternism.'

Lau (2009) in drawing on the term 'subalternism' is referring to Spivak (1988), who, within the theoretical framework of post-colonial studies, draws inspiration from Said's (1978) *Orientalism* and, as Said himself did, on Gramsci, particularly, for the term 'subaltern'. In, Spivak's (1988) essay: 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', Spivak critiqued and compared how Foucault and Gilles Deleuze's benevolent impulse to speak for and represent subaltern groups, in this case, women in the Oriental location of South Asia, paradoxically silenced the subaltern in much the same way that colonialist had (Morton 2003:57).

Leading Spivak (1988) to examine how even radical western intellectual representations operate on two types of representation, the first is, representation as speaking for someone (as in political proxy) and the second is, representation as re-presented (as in artistic portrait).

As such, according to Spivak (1988:307): 'there is no space from which the sexed subaltern can speak', meaning that subaltern women are silenced and their resistance unrecognised. Thus, according to Bart Moore-Gilbert

(2000:542), Spivak's discourse is that the subaltern women are fated 'only to be known, represented, and spoken for in a distorted fashion by others, particularly by those who exploit them' (but also by concerned outsiders like aid workers or seemingly disinterested scholars, such as anthropologists). Spivak (1988) therefore concludes that 'the subaltern cannot speak' means that 'even when the subaltern makes an effort to the death to speak, she is not heard' (Morton 2003:66).

In other words, even when marginalised, disempowered, and silenced groups do speak, their speech acts remain unheard or 'not recognised within the dominant political system of representation' (Morton 2003:66). It is, therefore, the 'historically determinate systems of political and economic representations' within which marginalised women receive their discursive and political identities (Morton 2003:67). While Spivak (1988) focused on excavating the histories of subaltern women's resistance from the colonial archives, Re-Orientalism (Lau 2009) is a more contemporary phenomenon, in which, as Lau (2009:572) asserts, in:

'Re-Orientalism, we have the curious case in which the positionality of the powerful is simultaneously that of the insider and outsider, where the representing power can be simultaneously self and other.'

This insider and outsider positionality is, argues Lau (2009:527), in part due to the location in which 'diasporic writers are based' in that they are primarily in 'the Occident'.

What Lau (2009:527) is suggesting is that while this location might be viewed simply as Orientalism, it is different to the Saidian (1978:2) Orientalist, even in a new guise. To this end, Lau (2009:527) argues that it is not a straightforward form of Orientalism, in that, it is premised on the distinction that these diasporic writers 'can be identified as Orientals to some extent, culturally, ethnically, etc.' Next, diasporic authors are according to Lau (2009:572): 'not completely alien to the Orient but derive both ancestry and identity from the Orient (and indeed many have very immediate and strong links to the Orient)'. And, finally, Lau (2009:572) asserts that the relative location of diasporic writers both geographically outside of the Orient, and to South Asian writers who are based within the Orient, means that: 'diasporic South Asian writers are in a position of power and dominance, particularly where the issue of literary representation and image construction is concerned.'

That is to say, Said's (1978) *Orientalist* was predominately a privileged white male who lived and travelled to the Orient, in *Re-Orientalism* Lau (2009) argues that the South-Asian diasporic women writers now occupy this role. While Said (1978) used the example of the French writer Gustava Flaubert, to identify how Flaubert's representation of an Egyptian courtesan was part of the dynamic of power and dominance in image construction and representation through which Flaubert rendered the 'object' of his attention into the trope of the archetypal 'Oriental woman', as spoken for and represented as 'typically Oriental' (Said 1978:6).

Lau (2005:238) on the one hand, suggests that another characteristic of *Re-Orientalism* is that, so far, at least, '... it is predominantly the diasporic women

writers who are the creators and keepers of the global literary image of South Asian culture, and this trend looks set to continue'. Lau (2009:572) attributes this trend will be in terms of numbers, visibility, and accessibility, and through the output of the diasporic writers in part because these authors overwhelm those of the 'home authors' (as in, writing from within South Asia). Thus, similar to Said (1978), Lau's (2009:573) focus is on the literary arena, she claims that it is this 'very positionality of these diasporic authors [that] has enabled them, [to] voluntarily or otherwise, to re-orientalise'.

What Lau (2009:573) is identifying here are the mechanisms of Orientalism in operation, in which the representation of the Orient continues to be orientalised, through the Orientalism strategy offered by Said (1978:7). In that: Orientalism depends on this 'flexible positionality superiority...in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient'. In other words, what Lau (2009:574) is observing is that: 'Re-Orientalism...can be taken on by different parties, the relationship of unequal power relations has not changed.' However, Lau (2009:574) offers a qualification, in that it is not her 'contention that the diasporic authors necessarily have any insidious intention, or consciously conceived aim, to re-orientalise, but that it is precisely their positionality, both individual and collective positionality, that has rendered this process of Re-Orientalism so widespread as to be almost inevitable in the genre [of contemporary South Asian literature]'

Taking Lau's (2009) Re-Orientalism and turning now towards the arena of religious knowledge generations and production and more specifically, the mobilisation of knowledge to change or challenge discourses particular within

the spaces from which the sexed subaltern cannot speak (Spivak 1988:307), I focus in on the detail of American Muslim women's scholarship on religious literacy. Juliane Hammer (2012:63) undertook an examination of American Muslim women and religious authority and activism and drawing on Grewal (2014) argues that the notion of 'Muslim Orientalism' is a theme that can be applied to American Muslim women's intellectual religious knowledge production, in that, Hammer argues, that this knowledge production is viewed, by its authors, as 'culture free' to Muslim countries, who are classed as having cultural baggage. As Hammer (2012:63) asserts: '...pure and unaltered versions of Islam' constituted by American Muslims is a '...kind of Muslim Orientalism, in which countries are not only perceived as different but as less Muslim and 'inferior'".

Concerning this study, I suggest that this Muslim Orientalism goes a step further, in that, if we draw on the characteristics of Re-Orientalism, as described by Lau (2009) above, then these women are similar to the diasporic South Asian writers in that they are at once but inside and outside, and that these religious subjects might be representative of a 'new manifestation of Orientalism' (Lau 2009, Lau and Mendes 2011:1) in which the cultural construction of the location of the Orient and the positive image of a (western or 'Other') Muslim Self is cast against the 'East' as the 'Other'.

In this equation the religious knowledge producers (such as American Muslims or those within Muslim communities within diasporic locations across the globe) or those engaged in gender justice discourses, whether at a theoretical or/and praxis level are then: 'cultural producers with eastern affiliations [who must]

come to terms with an orientalised East' (Lau and Mendes 2011:1) and who, do not cast themselves as agents of the 'West' because their interpretational projects or praxis has explored colonialism (Hammer 2012:63) and Islamophobia, racism and other axis of discrimination within the Orient and the Occident, and are not, as Grewal (2014) points out in her study, free from 'cultural baggage'. In other words, 're-Orientalism' is thus described as 'Orientalism perpetuated by Orientals...perpetrating certain and selected types of Orientalism's.' (Lau and Mendes 2011:1).

Drawing then on Re-Orientalism theory, I posit that the way diasporic religious producers of knowledge construct a version and vision of religious 'gender justice' in theory/theology and those who mobilise religious knowledge production, generated by diasporic religious producers of knowledge, to operationalise their vision and version of 'gender justice praxis' (who can occupy both these positions) reflect both how these 'Oriental' producers and mobilisers represent the Orient/Islam and their relation with their Islam/Orient through what they produce and reproduce (Nazir 2017 :17). For example, in the deployment of binary formulations, of 'cultural practice' and 'religious practices' as being separate, diasporic producers and mobilisers of religious knowledge, cast cultural and religious practices within violent hierarchical binaries, in which the narrative that 'religion' trumps 'culture is then a reductive categorisation of each and can lead to polemic and homogenous and reductive constructions and 'truth claims.

Thus, in the 'quest for authenticity' and to establish a representation as genuine and true' (Lau and Mendes 2011, Nazir 2017:17), and have to ensure that they

can establish a lineage within Islamic authority (Hammer 2012; Grewal 2014); diasporic Muslim religious knowledge producers and diasporic Muslim religious knowledge mobilisers, for example, faith actors within Development, may in attempting to offer new configurations of 'gender justice' have to manage expectations.

That is to say, if they want this knowledge to be classed as authorised and legitimate, I argue that, as Muslims in the diaspora, they have to navigate their orientation within a diasporic discourse of Orientalism. An Orientalism that has been framed within an internalised form of previous manifestations of the discourse of Orientalism.

What I am experimenting with is the idea as to how might these re-orientations simply be repeating or revisiting previous discourses of Orientalism and the possibility of the repositioning of the Orientalism itself (Salgado 2011). Another way to think about this might be to suggest that 'Islam' is the 'East' and, therefore, as the centre of 'Islam' and the very real 'Islam' in the 'West', as the periphery to Islam of the East, is not more stable than or even separate, as the formula of a separate 'West' is to the 'East' as advanced in the clash of civilisation discourses. These binaries may be more unstable and, therefore, more fluid, due to what Grewal (2014:17) identifies as a: 'politics of location, shifting insides and outsides, of afflictions and distances'.

Grewal's discussion is about critical contemporary anthropology and Emma Tomalin (2020:24), in her discussion on the turn to religion within development, advocates similarly, that within development research there is a need to explore

faith-actor-oriented approaches to understanding the nexus between religion-development-humanitarianism. To this end, Tomalin (2020:24) draws from the anthropology of development to conclude that faith actors within FBOs who are engaged in consultations, negotiations, and implementations of development frameworks, particularly, global aid development initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); are often engaged with local faith actors, for example, places of worship and religious leaders as well as with non-religious actors within 'complex and incomplete secular habitas' (Tomalin 2020:25); tend to shift 'register from secular to faith languages depending on the nature of the particular field' (Tomalin 2020:24).

According to Tomalin (2020:24), development anthropologists call these social and conceptual spaces, in which different groups intersect are: 'sites of 'common interests' as well as having the propensity to generate conflict due to the contradictory interests and objectives or unequal power relations'. That is to say, the Muslim subject is no longer confined to the 'East'. Rather, the Muslim subject operates, acts in, and acts from within multiple sites, locations, social, and conceptual spaces, and these multiple sites can lead to faith actors themselves encountering and shaping development discourses and frameworks, as they translate the language of developmental frameworks into relevant formats and find strategic ways to employ them. In other words, how they use the language of religion to shift 'secular scripts' into 'sacred scripts' (Tomalin 2020:21). What Grewal (2014) and Tomalin (2020) are suggesting then is that in the case of faith actors within FBOs, for example in the UK, and in the case of Grewal, American Muslim youth who travel in global Islamic networks in search of religious

pedagogy to bring back to US mosques, highlight the multiple directions of the flow of ideas, practices, and people within a global age.

The very discourses around 'gender justice' as shaped by the very subjectivity of subaltern voices within the discourse of Islam, as authored by, for example, Muslim women in the diaspora (Wadud 1999, Amina 2006, Mir-Hosseini 2022) and through the lived identities of Muslim queer intersectional discourses (Yip 2005, Rahman 2010, Rahman 2014) and the studies of the lived experiences of diasporic Muslims in the Occident, either to the Orient or within the Occident (Yip 2004, Grewal 2014, Petersen 2019, Ali 2022) highlights how the 'other' is an unstable category.

That is to say, where insider and outsider and 'native perspectives/informer/informants/intellectuals' (Nazir 2017:18) may, on the one hand, be imagined as 'hybrid diasporic subjects' (Nazir 2017:39), on the other hand, I question whether the notion of 'hybrid diasporic subjects' may only continue to construct the binary formulations and thereby fail to deconstruct or recognise the liminal spaces within which diasporic religious communities have to negotiate both inside and outside of these spaces or work-in and work-out how to work with the unfinished conceptual categories such as gender.

That is to say, Said (1978:24) did not suggest that his discourse on Orientalism was finished, rather he asserted that he had described 'parts of that fabric ['as thick a discourse as Orientalism'] at certain moments, and merely to suggest the existence of a larger whole...'. Finally, Said (1978:25) addressed readers from 'the so-called Third World' to understand the *strength* of Western cultural

discourse, a strength too often mistaken as merely decorative or superstructural' to show the: 'formidable structure of cultural domination and, specifically for former colonised people, the dangers and temptations of employing this structure upon themselves or others',

Said's *Orientalism* remains a seminal work in understanding how Western academic systems have historically constructed and perpetuated a distorted image of the East. In the 2003 edition of his book, Said elaborates on how Orientalist discourse evolved from European classical studies to American Area Studies, specifically focusing on how institutions and academic frameworks continue to propagate these narratives (Said 2003).

Said argues that the academic study of the Orient often relied on a reductive portrayal, which served to justify colonial domination by framing Eastern societies as backward and in need of Western intervention. This academic transmission is crucial, as Said notes because it highlights the role of educational systems in reproducing colonial ideologies.

Institutions in Europe initially framed the Orient through the lens of classics, while post-World War II America rebranded this discourse through Asian Studies, perpetuating stereotypes under a new guise. Moreover, the concept of 'native informants' is central to this critique. Said underscores how Western scholars often relied on select individuals from colonised regions, who were considered authoritative voices on their culture, thereby creating a class of 'authentic' informants that further entrenched Orientalist perspectives.

Building on Said's insights, I extend his critique by exploring additional dimensions such as gender, re-Orientalism (Lau 2009), and Muslim Orientalism (Hammer 2012). While Said primarily focused on cultural and political aspects, this study highlights how gender dynamics intersect with Orientalist discourse. I seek to demonstrate that Orientalism is not just a unidirectional imposition but a dynamic discourse that can be appropriated and perpetuated from within different contexts. Furthermore, Muslim Orientalism, particularly in the post-9/11 era, and within the turn to religion era illustrates how the West continues to construct a monolithic image of Islam.

The original contribution of this thesis lies in demonstrating how gender, re-Orientalism, and Muslim Orientalism are not only linked to Said's work but also extend his analysis into new areas. By examining the intersection of gender, gender justice and Orientalism, this thesis highlights how an interdisciplinary critique can enrich our understanding of Orientalist discourse.

Re-orientalism offers a framework to understand how Muslim societies and Muslim faith actors sometimes internalise and replicate Western stereotypes, highlighting the complex interplay between different discourses. This approach challenges the binary of East versus West, emphasising the agency of Muslim actors in the perpetuation of Orientalist narratives.

Finally, the focus on Muslim Orientalism provides a contemporary lens to examine how Orientalist discourse adapts and persists in the modern era, particularly in the context of global politics and the War on Terror. By incorporating these dimensions, the thesis not only reaffirms Said's original

critique but also expands it to address the evolving nature of Orientalism in a globalised world.

In the next section of this chapter, I locate this project within the micro-level of force relations.

RELIGION IN DIASPORA

While in the previous two chapters the genealogy traced the broader historical debates and discourses in terms of geopolitical debates and discourses on women/gender and Islam in the context of majority-Muslim settings, this chapter will focus on the experimental knowledge generation of subaltern voices of those who practice in dialogue with religion in diaspora (Bielo 2015:141) within the context of non-Muslim majority settings. The key theme of 'gender justice' as presented within these debates and discourses through the scholarship of contemporary Muslim women and their engagement within the Islamic intellectual tradition is then an expression of religion in diaspora.

Religion in the diaspora can be understood as an expression of religious globalisation, in which the practising of religion in the diaspora has four distinct features: 'dispersion from an original homeland, collective memory of the homeland, maintenance and ties with the homeland, and an on-going experience of difference with the new place of belonging' (Bielo 2015:141). Ultimately, 'diasporas are about a relationship with multiple places [and] remembered and continued connection with a homeland and the tensions of adjusting to a new home foster a 'double consciousness' about that place is actively conjured' (Bielo 2015:141).

That is to say, the contemporary debates on 'gender justice' are part of transnational debates in which communities of Muslims are negotiating the boundaries of the sacred in both the East and in the West, these debates constitute both globalised and 'indigenized' (Grewal 2014) communities of Muslims who are living out Islam⁷⁷ in the West and are not simply mimicking the Islam of the East. Thus, religion is not something that is simply done out there, it is something that is also being done over here. What I mean here is, taken from the 'orientalist' perspective, 'Islam' is not a monolithic tradition. Rather it is a discursive tradition (Asad 1996) and is not confined to the 'exotic east' of the past, rather, it has an 'indigenized' element, replete with various challenges and tensions.

Tensions that result in 'crisis' in issues such as 'authority', 'hierarchy', 'orthodoxy' and 'authenticity'. Shahab Ahmed (2016:6) offers several thinking tools drawn on to how to frame 'Islam' as an 'object phenomenon' which will be significant to how I understand the debates and discourses for this study. The first is that in taking a historical approach to his question: '*What is Islam?*' Ahmed (2016) proposed that there is a distinction between: (1) 'Islam' as a matter of Divine command (which I understand as a theological question) and; (2) 'Islam' in how it is/has come to be 'conceptualized' as in, what *is* Islam as a human experience (which I understand as the theoretical question).

⁷⁷ 'Living Out Islam' is the title of a book by Scott Siraj al-Haqq Kugle (2014) in which he captures the voices of gay, lesbian, and transgender Muslims who 'live in secular democratic countries'. My use of the phrase here is not in terms of those who are 'queer' and Muslim; I use the phrase as a verb; although I will be referring to the author/works in relation to IMI, as he is one of the scholars whom IMI draw on for their knowledge production.

Consequently, what is Islam – as a theoretical question is not the same as the theological question, what is Islam?

That is to say, what is between text and practice, according to Ahmed (2016:5) this distinction offers a way to explore 'Islam' through the expression of the: *'historical and human phenomenon* that is Islam in its plenitude and complexity of meaning...[in conceptualising Islam in this way, Ahmed offers a helpful way to navigate through the debates and discourses within the corpus of the body of the literature on debates and discourses on gender and gender justice praxis in which Islam can be] conceptualized as a means to a meaningful understanding both of Islam and human experience'.

The second is that a meaningful conceptualization of 'Islam' is, according to Ahmed (2016:6), a theoretical object and analytical category that needs to acknowledge the:

'capaciousness, complexity, and often outright contradiction that obtains within a historical phenomenon that has proceeded from human engagement with the idea and reality of Divine Communication to Muhammad the messenger of God'.

That is to say, Ahmed (2016) invites the possibility of viewing Islam as Islams. In doing so, Ahmed (2016:542) puts forward a conceptualization of Islam that can map meaning on Islam as a historical and human experience that can be viewed as contradictory, polyvalent, complex, multidimensional, diverse, and varied. Ahmed (2016: 542) offers a way to conceptualize Islam not 'by elimination of difference but by the inclusion of difference'.

The third is to understand 'islam' as a personal process beyond communal identity and belonging to the ummah (Muslim community). In this way, what Ahmed (2016:102) attempts to provide is a framework for understanding the contradictory instances in which Muslims work-in and work out the acts of islam as: 'discursive and praxical statements of islam' (Ahmed 2016:103) (as the relationship between God and the individual and community of those to recognise this relationship); in doing so, according to Ahmed (2016:103) this enables the individual to answer the question 'what is Islam?' In this study how Muslims define what is Islam and how they ought to act, is part of the ontological starting point in how they mobilise and generate religious knowledge and conceptualise, negotiate, and construct praxis.

Shaping diasporic communities: working-in and working-out islam

For now, I return to the notion of the 'indigenized' living out Islam in the West. Within the 'orientalist' perspective, 'Islam' is said to be part of the 'exotic East' and, therefore, separate from the West. For now, I simply ask that the concept of an 'indigenization' of the living out Islam, within the context of the UK, is a helpful medium through which to explore the experiences of lived experiences of the religious subjects and their actions of working-in and working-out islam within their roles as faith actors in a development organisation.

That is to say, rather than use the label 'British Islam', I ask that the reader apply a more fluid usage, to capture the complexities better. For example, John Narayan (2019) has recognised the importance of drawing connections between activism movements within the US and the UK. Narayan (2019) focused on the influence of the Black Power activism movements from the US

and the forgotten history of British Black Power. Within the context of this case study, the influence of activism and justice movements, such as the feminist and women's hermeneutical projects by American Muslim women, their activism around issues of authority and ritual practices, are less buried in the contemporary context and, therefore, the importance of drawing connections between these forms of religious knowledge generation and religious knowledge mobilisation on the discourse of gender justice within the in diaspora offer ways to understand how these mechanisms of power and knowledge might be shaping diasporic communities of Muslims.

American Muslim scholars, like Hammer (2012) Grewal (2014) and Tazeen.M. Ali (2022) provide a new narrative framework, in which an indigenized experience of Islam is not a recent import. Grewal (2014) and Ali (2022) explore the lived experiences of communities of Muslims as part of the diasporic experience of living out religion in the West, more so, living out Islam in America provides ways to understand, Grewal's (2014) concept of an indigenization of an American Islam. Grewal's (2014) site of attention led her to explore how some American Muslims are in a 'crisis of authority' (Ali 2022:13). Ali's (2022) work is also situated within this crisis of authority and her analysis of the Women's Mosque of America lead her to conclude:

'[u]nderstanding the contours of global Islamophobia helps us to think about how development within American Islam reverberates throughout the rest of the so-called 'Muslim world' and vice versa. Muslims in the US should therefore not be treated as peripheral religious actors who exist on the outskirts of the study of Islam, but instead recognised as players

who contribute to global and geopolitical conversations about Islam and Muslims. American Muslim interventions in Islamic law, exegesis, or politics have implications for communities and societies beyond their own. Moreover, recent debates over the state of Islamic studies have brought to bear the issues of limiting the field to the Middle East, Arabic sources, or medieval texts. Ultimately, Arab-centric trends in Islamic studies can reify Orientalist and Islamophobic frameworks about what Islam *is*, which has repercussions within the academy in lived religious communities' (Ali 2022: 235-236)

Ali's (2022) comments point to Muslim Orientalism, having said that, the point I wish to draw out is that from an indigenized living out Islam, in the context of the UK, similar to Grewal's (2014) and Ali's (2022) studies of American Islam; the 'sacred East' in which the Islamic tradition has both a past and a present; is often viewed as the authentic site in terms of religious world making; from which Islamic authority and even an idealised Islam is practised.

The argument by Ali (2022) suggests that, perhaps, for those who are practising and trying to find an expression of Islam in the diaspora: in which '...diasporas are a relationship with multiple places' (Bielo 2015:141), and the historical dominance of the Islam of the east, has cast a long shadow over those who are practising Islam in diasporas in the west. The resulting liminality from which new discourses on the expression of living out Islam in the West are not simply in juxtaposition to binary constructions of old, as in religion versus secular or east versus west. Rather, the debates around gender justice might suggest that the diaspora Islams are polyvalent narratives in which the workings-in and the

workings-outs of the acts of islam⁷⁸ (Ahmed 2015:102) are shaping the Islam over here and over there.

The Turn to Religion (a development story)

In the wake of 9/11 as discussed in chapter three and in light of the above discourses on Orientalism, Grewal (2014:16) posits the question: 'Who defines Islam today'. For Grewal (2014:16) this question is then part of the global debates about: a) Islamic authority, and b) Islam's place in the world. While it is possible to situate this debate within the crude distinction of secular versus non-secular or within the 'clash' discourse (Rahman 2010), I, instead, drawing on Grewal's (2014) question, extend this to the field of international development and peer through the lens of the turn to religion narrative (Tomalin 2018, Tomalin 2020). In doing so, I not only situate the question: 'who defines Islam today' within the narrative of the turn to religion I then draw the attention away from violent hierarchical binaries, in that the turn to religion narrative was based on a deliberate shifting of engagement between development institutions and religion to meet development goals (Tomalin 2018). To put it another way, faith actors, who had been considered on the margins of development but who had overlapping goals with development institutions, came to be viewed as legitimate development partners within the narrative of the turn to religion (Tomalin 2018).

⁷⁸ Ahmed (2015:103) distinguishes between Islam and islam, in that islam refers to personal acts of islam and the personal relationship between believer and God and it is through these personal acts of islam that makes Islam. In drawing on this, I argue that islam is then how the religious subject interplays with the role of the faith-actor in development. It is the individual 'discursive and praxical statement of islam' through which the 'individual Muslim' makes islam and is 'making Islam'

That is to say, Islam's place in the world, through the development narrative of the turn to religion is given a place within the development world and Islamic authority, within this location, is then authorised. This legitimacy and authority are then further affirmed through the choice of selecting partnerships and the 'outsourcing' of 'religious-literacy knowledge building' by development institutions (donor agencies) within the nexus of development-religion praxis to faith actors within FBOs. For example, in the UK, DFID engaged in partnerships with UK-based FBOs and relied on them to generate religious literacy relevant to development and gender (Khalaf-Elledge 2021:82).

While Khalaf-Elledge (2021:82) problematises this outsourcing of religious literacy to faith actors, calling for the need to produce 'internal religious literacy building', her argument is based on the suggestion that this outsourcing is a feature of development continued formulation that religion is a 'unique feature of so-called developing countries [and therefore a failure by development to] acknowledge that religion influences social systems worldwide.' (Khalaf-Elledge 2021:82). Khalaf-Elledge (2021:82) argues for religion to be a mainstream issue within development. Tomalin (2018) debunks any suggestion that the inclusion of faith actors and the partnering with FBOs might be viewed as a: 'desecularization of development' or a 'post-secular development praxis' (Tomalin 2018). Rather, Tomalin (2018, 2020) asserts that global development institutions partnered with FBOs who looked like them, and FBOs in turn adapted themselves to be authorised to contribute to secular global development practices and debates.

Anya Topolski (2018:2180) identifies how ‘political theology’⁷⁹ has influenced secularised strategies in which the ‘othering’ of religions and religious minorities in Europe has resulted in a ‘particular practice of secular “ ‘minority management’ ...born under the shadow of Catholic theology’ (Topolski 2018:2194). In other words, drawing on these themes, what I am suggesting is that, despite the turn to religion the structural traces of Orientalism persisted within development discourses. And, within development discourses, religion continued to be a foreign land within the construction of a secular West.

For Muslim Faith Based Organisations (FBOs), who are engaging with and mobilising religious knowledge in partnership with development narratives; the process of producing religious knowledge on ‘faith-literacy’ on development and on ‘gender justice’ might be better understood through the frame of a Muslim-on-Muslim engagement, and one that may have been shaped within the Muslim Question (Topolski 2018). That is to say, the Muslim question and the business of religion being offshored to Western-based Muslim aid organisations, draws the gaze towards the continuation and operation of orientalist binary frameworks of ‘them’ and ‘us’.

In drawing on this model, the ‘them’ and ‘us’ binary orientalist construct inconspicuously not only ‘accommodates’ Western-based Muslim aid organisations while also strategically ‘managing’ the business of global aid by ‘institutionalizing’ ‘them’ and the ‘religion’ of the ‘other’ through what Topolski

⁷⁹ ‘Political theology analyses the secularized, previously Christian, theological concepts that structure contemporary politics (e.g. sovereignty) (Schmitt 2010). Its aim is to examine and expose how theological forms and models of power continue to operate, often inconspicuously, in politics today’ (Topolski 2018:2180).

(2018:2193) claims to be the practice by the 'ruling power' to: 'enforced collaboration with power in combination with reduced agency and depoliticization' (Topolski 2018:2194).

It is then strategically managed by internally dividing groups into 'good' and 'bad' Muslims and Islam (Mamdani 2002). This management of 'religious minorities' 'over here' and 'over there' is established at the national level or/and transnational level (Topolski 2018). At first glance, however, this differentiation of 'good Muslim/Islam' and 'bad Muslim/Islam' could be read as a challenge to the Orientalist discourse of Islam as being conceptualised reductively. Thereby sounding the death knell on orientalist tropes that **all** Muslims be viewed as one homogenous group, characterised as backwards, strange, and as 'them' against the normative 'us' European (Said 1979, Topolski 2018).

Muslim Orientalism: The native informant or development expert?

Grewal (2014:18) uses the term 'native informant' to describe:

'experts whose authority is derived by the twin sources of their status as 'natives' and the facility by which they reproduce the tropes, images, and obsessions of Westerners through the classical Orientalist methodology of circular citations, only referencing evidence that confirms the thesis of Muslim racial and cultural inferiority'.

I draw on Grewal's (2014) definition to suggest that in the turn to religion narrative (Tomalin 2018) the use of faith actors within Muslim FBOs, by development institutions, to generate religious-development knowledge is premised on this notion of the native informant.

In that, while this might mark the death of the 'Western expert' in development, the rise of the native informant within development discourses on religion and development might be akin to another group of native informants within development, namely, 'feminist' policy actors within development discourses on gender and development. That is to say, in thinking with Foucault, discourses and discursive practices are better 'understood in a particular culture rather than searching for a founding moment' (Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007:52).

Thus, in viewing faith actors within Muslim FBOs within the particular culture of development and the specific historical context of the turn to religion narrative, the 'outsourcing' of religious development knowledge generation might then be understood as a process of democratisation of knowledge generation to marginalised development actors, who could now be invited to participate in receiving donor funding and policy dialogue (Tomalin 2018) in similar ways as feminist actors were invited into development.

The Muslim development 'expert' may then be similar to the feminist development expert, who can explain the causes behind gender issues and gender injustices/and particular practices. In other words, faith actors within Muslim FBOs, particularly those within the UK, can attempt to explicate the relationship between religion (Islam) and development to explain why gender injustices occur in the particular cultural context of development discourses, in as much as within the intellectual tradition of Islamic discourses.

Moreover, the religious knowledge generation of faith actors can then, similar to feminist-development knowledge generation, be mobilised to meet the

objectives of development aid projects, through the process of instrumentalism. This is similar to gender being used as a means to an end (Khalaf-Elledge 2021:32). Religion and Muslim FBOs who operate within the UK, are then viewed with the potential of adding value to the sector (De Cordier 2009).

Part of the reason why 'Western-based Muslim aid organisations' added value is that they are said to be: a) viewed as authentic in the places where Islam has a place in development, and b) because Muslim FBOs help mitigate the growing suspicion around aid actors from the west being associated with 'Western powers' instrumental political agendas within these contexts (De Cordier 2009). This then situates these faith actors within colonialist discourses and Orientalist discourses.

Muslim Orientalism: The native informant or the religious (Islamic) Feminist expert?

The idea of the Muslim expert as a native informant who is situated within the context of the West can also be extended to the knowledge generation project within Islamic Feminism. There are two types of feminist/women's engagement with the Islamic tradition, especially in terms of gender justice discourses and debates, which are best viewed as conversations from within the tradition, but which are played out in global and public debates on Islamic authority. The two strands are: a) feminist tafsir (hermeneutical) (Wadud 1999, Barlas 2002, Chaudhry 2013, Lamrabet 2016); and b) Islam and tradition – legal rulings (fiqh – Islamic jurisprudence) (Ali 2008, Mir-Hosseini 2009, Abou El Fadl 2014, Mubarak 2022).

However, this study is not situated within Islamic Feminist debates and discourses, as this research does not fall within the two strands mentioned. What is necessary for this study is to recognise the knowledge generation and production of American Muslim women to the debates on religious knowledge production and the mobilisation of religious knowledge in the area of gender justice within the places where Islam has a place in the world. For example, the knowledge production of Muslim women in America has been shaped within the context of secular academic systems and within the context of social justice projects that have been shaped in the context of secular liberalism and feminist theory (Hammer 2012:119).

The religious knowledge generation offered by Muslim feminist exegetical interpretations of the textual re-readings of Islam's sacred text is, if seen within the context of development discourses, one that supports the idea that Muslim women are still required to be liberated from Islam. Thus, supporting feminist exegetical projects may then be viewed as part of the Orientalist's viewpoint in which brown women continue to be classed as the 'victims' and require saving from the brown male patriarchal Islam (Bouachrine 2014). This myth is part of the stories told within development discourse in which male patriarchal Islamic interpretations are classed as continuing to hinder the development goal of gender equality and modernisation (Tomalin 2020; Khalaf-Elledge 2021).

The reproduction of the Orientalist trope is now shaped through the female religious subject. The Muslim feminist expert, the native informant, and the subaltern can speak. And, as Ali's (2022) quote indicates, Said's (1978) Orientalist framework can be threaded through, moreover, Lau's (2009)

framework of Re-Orientalism is woven between the passionate call for authority and authenticity.

While Islamic feminist discourses offer new possibilities, this resistance to a 'men's Islam' (Ahmed 1992) by way of women's ways of knowing (Wadud 2021) are often hedged on the view that these interpretations are free of cultural baggage and unfettered by the colonial and post-colonial histories and, therefore, more authentic (Hammer 2012:68). Leading Hammer (2012:68) to suggest that this is a form a Muslim orientalism. However, these interpretations are subject to challenge, in what Aysha Chaudhry (2013) has called the 'authority dilemma'. In that, within the context of the classical Islamic intellectual tradition, the debate over authenticity and authority results in criticisms and suspicion over these interpretations.

Development and Religion: Shifting Scripts.

Tomalin (2018, 2020) and Khalaf-Elledge (2021: 54-58) identify distinct phases within development history and the relationship between religion and development strategies shifting from religion in the colonial pre-development era, to religion during the post-war development era, and finally, religion in contemporary development discourses, resulting in partnership with FBOs in development. Yet despite these shifting discourses, the integration of religion into development practice, according to Khalaf-Elledge (2021:58) has remained difficult, in part due to the idea that religion is viewed as 'toxic' by 'secular-minded development practitioners and policymakers'. This view of religion as a hindrance to the agenda of development evokes further tensions when associated with gender development agendas, particularly the adoption of

religious interpretations that may be: 'dominant and typically male perspectives within religious traditions, [that may] marginalise other perspectives such as feminist or gender-equal religious interpretations' (Khalaf-Elledge 2021:60).

The problem with this argument is that religious interpretations within the tradition are being conceptualised within a binary and impose a violent hierarchy in which feminist and gender-equal interpretations are viewed as the corrective of choice. This then, within the grammar of feminist goals, is often articulated as 'resistance against oppressive and dominating operations of power' (Mahmood 2011:34). It also assumes that the dominating operations of power that require resisting are those of patriarchal interpretations, that may not map onto development agendas. It fails to consider what Saba Mahmood (2011:34) argues is the 'progressive politics' and 'liberal-progressive accounts' that shape 'feminist politics' and articulate resistance within a problematic analytical constellation that fails to consider that devout Muslim women's resistance to opposing hegemonic norms maybe those outside of religion.

Equally, Grewal (2014:242) in her study of American student-travellers who choose tradition in their pursuit of religious knowledge often come into conflict with various structures of authority, including Western cultural domination and Western feminism, as well as local male-dominated and familial authority within different points of resistance and submission. In chapters two and three, the multivariant forms of resistance and submission within the debates and discourses on gender/women and Islam, remind us, as Ahmed (2016:545) does, that within a complex historical phenomenon of a religion like Islam, it is important to 'provide conceptual means that serves to bring into focus the

recognition of all forms and tokens and calibrations and expressions that are Islam.'

As feminists and or/both Muslim researchers, these include those that may not fit or map onto our feminist standpoints, especially if we wish not to engage in 'epistemic violence' (Spivak 1988). Mahmood (2011) and Grewal (2014) grappled with this, as I have. Grewal (2014:77) recognised the need to resist and complicate simpler narratives offered by her interlocutors and thereby 'not only debunk their accounts' but to represent the Islam tradition as 'heterogeneous and dynamic shifting ground...[t]he challenge for those studying religious communities is to remain alert to the tensions between tradition claims and abridgements of tradition, without privileging one category over the other.'

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I set out the theoretical, conceptual, and analytical tools I intend to draw from starting with the work of Foucault (1978), I outline the thinking tools that I will draw on from Queer theory (Butler 1990, McCann and Monaghan 2019); Western Feminist theory (Hemmings 2011); and, Development theory (Bebbington, Hickey et al. 2008, Tomalin 2020, Khalaf-Elledge 2021, Tomalin 2021). However, conscious of not wanting to engage in 'epistemic violence' (Spivak 1988) by drawing only on Western and white scholarship. I draw on thinking tools and analytical concepts that have been developed by Muslim scholarship on Muslim subjects (albeit, shaped within the Western academe and is, therefore, subject to intellectual cultural baggage). Here I draw from the field of the anthropology of religion (Grewal 2014, Bielo 2015) and Muslim feminist scholarship (Mahmood 2011, Hammer 2012, Ahmed

2015, Ali 2022). I also revisited the discourse of Orientalism and explored Muslim Orientalism (Hammer 2012, Grewal 2014, Patel 2022) and posited that Re-Orientalism might be a better concept in which to understand and explore this particular research project (Lau 2009, Lau and Mendes 2011, Salgado 2011).

In the next chapter, on methodology and research design, I will be exploring how the above discussion has impacted this researcher, in that, even though this researcher did not go off to a distant 'field', the issues of 'going native' or suspicions of objectivity due to my location as a 'native anthropologist', brought about similar struggles as articulated by Grewal (2014) above. Within this space, new dimensions of thinking about the challenges in undertaking Muslim-on-Muslim research highlight the need for more research on the experiences of researchers who undertake Muslim-on-Muslim research, within the academe. I will explore how Muslim-on-Muslim research is still a relatively new area of research (Quraishi 2008, Abbas 2010, Ryan, Kofman et al. 2011, Hussain and Cunningham 2022) and why I call for the need to develop new methodological tools, in the same way, that feminist researchers did when entered the field (Oakley 1981, Oakley 1998, Oakley 2016).

5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design and the Challenges of the Research Process

In '[t]he nexus of knowledge and power creating the 'Oriental' and in a sense obliterating him (sic) as a human being is therefore not for me an exclusively academic matter. Yet it is an intellectual matter of some very obvious importance.' (Said 1978:27)

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I offer the reader an autobiographical account of the research process. The various challenges and complications throughout the research project have resulted in macro and micro adjustments and ultimately shaped the research project and process. This chapter describes and analyses the PhD research process by focusing on the complications and challenges of undertaking Muslim-on-Muslim research within development fieldwork at 'home'.

Following the introduction, this chapter is then divided into four main sections. In the first section and by way of offering the reader context, I begin with the tale of how this research journey has twisted and turned. Each twist, each turn, has contoured this research project often resulting in various tensions and messiness. In telling the tale I weave myself into the research process to describe and explore the significance of the researcher's positionality in light of the discussions in chapter four on 'epistemic violence' (Spivak 1988). I also consider the autobiographical experiences of undertaking research due to my proximity to the religious subjects within the context of 'home' as a 'native

informant' (Grewal 2014) and feminist researcher exploring religious subjects (Mahmood 2006, Grewal 2014).

In the second section, I discuss the research design and the use of the case study approach for this research project (Algozzine and Hancock 2017 , Thomas 2019).

In the third section, I examine and describe the various methods of data collection, their ethics, benefits, and challenges more specifically I will describe the interview process, the challenges, and sensitivities in: a) undertaking Muslim-on-Muslim research (Quraishi 2008, Abbas 2010, Ryan, Kofman et al. 2011, Zubair, Martin et al. 2012); and b) cross-gender interviewing (Momsen 2006). Included in this section will be how the interviews were conducted, and how the material was recorded.

In the final section, I describe and discuss the analysis process of the primary data collection, namely the semi-structured interviews. I also outline the use of additional research material, namely, the Gender Justice Policy, which I will analyse and discuss in the empirical chapters that will follow this chapter.

Throughout this chapter, I draw attention to the complications that insider-outsider dynamics can have within the data collection and data analysis process, and in producing knowledge (Reay 1996 , Kanuha 2000 , Ryan, Kofman et al. 2011) and, how the complications and challenges, these lessons from the field, led to Orientalism (Said's 1978); and, re-Orientalism (Lau 2005, Lau 2009).

Curiouser and Curiouser

It is deliciously delightful to find a white rabbit to chase, at least that is until you find yourself in a pool of your own tears and screaming, 'Enough!' The story of Alice's adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass, best capture my journey. Having fallen down the rabbit hole, I entered worlds different to my own, found myself in a foreign country, without even leaving home. I have questioned my sanity, sat with nonsense, and looked for meaning.

Begin at the beginning and go on

This project began as a case study of one single organisation, namely Islamic Relief. In 2014 I was invited to meet with a senior member of staff within the Research and Development arm at IR, in Birmingham. After an initial discussion, I was invited to follow IR's journey as they embarked on the goal of producing a Gender Justice Policy as part of their move towards Gender Mainstreaming. What piqued my curiosity was that they had intended to do their Gender Mainstreaming and policy development through what they described as an Islamic framework. At the time, this was a unique course of action in the field of gender mainstreaming and development, which had, historically always been a secular initiative. The idea that an Islamic framework, or rather, religion, would be used as the framework from within which to explore gender justice chimed, at that time, with the debates and discourses around Islamic feminism. It seemed quite irresistible, not to chase this white rabbit. More so, one of the critiques I had with the discourses around Islamic feminism had been about

whether this theoretical theology would translate on the ground and into different contexts. At this stage, I was aware that IR was not mobilising around this feminist knowledge production. I was, nevertheless, keen to explore a more intriguing aspect of this potential research project. IRs entry point into gender and development discourses from the margins. Moreover, in using an Islamic framework, as an alternative approach to gender mainstreaming strategies, I was simply curious as to how seemingly incongruent discourses might converse. It seemed like a neat case study on gender mainstreaming.

The helpful gatekeeper felt that my positionality as an insider-outsider and my previous research experience offered me an advantage in my master's dissertation had focused on gender mainstreaming at BRAC in Bangladesh⁸⁰ (Rao and Kelleher 1995, Rao and Kelleher 1998). As a native informant, my positionality would mean I would be aware of potential religious sensitivities and the various development modalities they would be engaged with. The initial research design for the case study included a triangulation of methods. This would include interviews with elite staff engaged in policy development, gender experts within the organisation, and elite staff interviews with different

⁸⁰ BRAC is a large NGO based in Bangladesh and are a home-based NGO several significant research projects have been conducted on them in terms of gender mainstreaming.

departments including heads of departments as identified by my helpful gatekeeper. A second method would be a questionnaire to staff within the organisation in the UK headquarters, once the policy had gone live, thereby enabling me to follow the journey of the policy and the gender mainstreaming journey within the organisation. A third source would be a policy analysis of the gender justice policy once it had gone live. Alongside all these processes of data collection, I would also be engaged in participant observation by inclusion within, for example, staff inductions and new training programmes that they would be initiating particularly concerning gender mainstreaming.

Thus, having been invited in by a helpful gatekeeper, who had sought out this collaboration, I was confident that the assurances from the gatekeeper that this research design and the methods of data collection, over time, would be possible. The gatekeeper did add a note of caution that there would be some resistance within the organisation to this level of transparency and scrutiny. However, the gatekeeper, confident in their social capital, was keen to undertake all the necessary negotiations required to gain access, as this was part of the goal of the research and development arm of IR, to generate new knowledge within the development sector on Muslim and Islamic development epistemology. The gatekeeper felt that the research project would be complementary to the organisational process, as the organisation was also in the process of developing this research and development arm.

A twist

However, the helpful gatekeeper left the organisation a month before I was due to start the data collection. At this stage, I had designed the interview protocol, and questionnaire, and had attended and started the slow process of building relationships within the organisation. By the time the new gatekeeper had arrived and had settled into their role, the time-lapse had coincided with the departures of various senior members of staff and staff with whom I had established rapport. As a result, the new gatekeeper was reluctant to continue the project as per the design. Although at this point, they had agreed, partly from goodwill, and partly out of rather tense negotiations with other gatekeepers, that I could still have access to a small sample of elite interviewees. This would include staff that had been engaged or involved with the actual development of the policy, but I would not be able to interview them until the policy had been developed and had gone live. This rather uncomfortable plot twist resulted in having to reconfigure the project as the original project was no longer tenable, and I was a third way into my research programme. As such, the project was reconfigured. Rather than look at the gender mainstreaming initiative of one organisation and the development of a gender mainstreaming and gender justice policy, I then extended the project and altered it to look at the issue of gender justice.

I intended to explore how FBOs in the UK negotiated gender justice discourses within their organisational context within a faith framework. So, the case study now became a multiple case study. As Islamic Relief was a mainstream faith-based organisation, I then identified a second mainstream faith-based organisation who were engaged with exploring gender justice through an

Islamic framework. I also identified two Muslim faith-based organisations that were exploring gender justice through an Islamic feminist-informed framework, specifically, Islamic feminist hermeneutical knowledge production. Each organisation draws on and from the Islamic intellectual tradition, while the two mainstream organisations drew on the normative Islamic tradition, the feminist-informed drew on newer Islamic-feminist theoretical theology.

Another twist

Having undergone tense negotiations with all four of the organisations to gain access, identify participants, develop interview schedules, and timetables, and identify gatekeepers. The main method and primary source of data collection was then reduced to a one-off semi-structured interview with all the participants in all four organisations. In the section on the interview process, the discussion will therefore be based on this one method of data collection and is encompassing all the interviews within that data collection period.

However, due to personal circumstances, I had to take an extended leave of absence just after I had completed all of my interviews with all four organisations. The leave of absence resulted in a prolonged gap between the data collection and returning to this research project. As such, the data collection became historical rather than live. Due to time constraints, on returning, I therefore had to decide to drop one of the organisations. The organisation that was dropped felt like it was an outlier organisation and therefore the focus would be on three organisations, including Islamic Relief, and the two Islamic feminist-informed organisations, on the basis that these

three organisations were all explicitly engaged with negotiating, constructing, and operationalising gender justice praxis within their organisational context.

A turn

Having started the analysis process with these three organisations, another set of difficulties challenges and time constraints meant that it became necessary to recognise that I would not be able to continue with all three organisations, even though I had been undertaking the analysis process. Again, a pragmatic, and heartbreaking, decision had to be made. The decision was to focus on one organisation. So, I returned to Islamic Relief as the main case study organisation because it was the most complete dataset that I had, both in terms of primary and secondary data sources. In the final section of this chapter on the data analysis process, I will outline the analysis process based on the three organisations. In deciding to return to a single case the benefits of moving to a depth single case above a comparative case offered certain strengths and richness. However, as I intend to show in the empirical chapters, I was only able to recognise and identify new ways of exploring the experiences of the faith actor experiences' of mobilising religious knowledge within the context of IR within the turn to religion discourse, because of the debt that I owe to the two Islamic feminist-informed organisations, who offered convergent and divergent narrative lens to IR and each other, that opened new possibilities of knowing the subject.

Another turn

While all three organisations were exploring gender justice, they chose to do this through different routes and by taking different directions (albeit situated within the discursive tradition of Islam). This posed many challenges, in trying to draw out the complexities within each organisation the project became unruly. However, it was only through exploring all three organisations that the use of queer concepts and queer feminist theorisation to challenge the binaries that I kept coming across and felt somewhat stuck and stifled by was made possible. It was only when I started applying a queer lens that I started to be able to trouble the binaries. It was in looking through the complete dataset during the initial analysis process of all three organisations that I began recognising new noticings. It was through the use of feminists' self-reflective practices during the data analysis stages my insider-outsider location, as a researcher and the various intersectional categories that I occupied throughout the whole research project, that these noticings began to highlight how I kept being caught up in and by and within feminist storytelling.

It was during the analysis process that the genealogical discourses and debates that I was familiar with, around the patriarchal discourse and the Muslim woman as a victim, revealed themselves to me. This narrative structure was stronger within one of the feminist-informed organisations (I will call this organisation F1) but less so within the second feminist-informed organisation which explored the intersectional categories of queer Muslim identities (I will call this organisation F2). I would find my emotions would ignite when I read the narratives of the testimonies of the female religious subjects within these organisations for whom the spiritual was personal. A personal praxis, but one they could identify with

their audiences, as part of a lived experience. It was in reflecting on these first and second steps during the analysis process that I noticed the meta-narratives that shaped the analysis process. I had to question why it was that I kept falling for these structures, particularly when juxtaposed against the data analysis of Islamic Relief.

It was when I explored Islamic Relief's deliberate decision not to use feminism and compared the deliberate and unapologetic use of feminism by the two feminist-inspired organisations that I started asking new questions of myself and the dataset and returned to theoretical frameworks to find new possibilities. It was only in seeing the micro-analysis of the details, the convergences between Islamic Relief and one of the feminist organisations (F1) who, similar to IR, were exploring issues around domestic violence that I was able to then recognise certain similarities within these narratives. Specifically, narratives around Muslim women as the victim. Something seemed untroubled. This was more than gender, there was something about the differential ways in which the female religious subjects, the participants across the three organisations located the Muslim woman victim in these narratives or in how they did not.

There appeared an insider-outsider narrative to the location of the Muslim woman, sometimes an object and sometimes a subject location in the narrative constructions offered. This shifting mechanism of object-subject location led me to muse on the question: was this feminism or might there be something else, an orientalist discourse? The echoes of the brown Muslim woman as the victim, as a construction of 'other' and spoken for and yet the subaltern was speaking.

The contours

Noticing this shifting mechanism of object and subject location, made me question if I might be orientalising these organisations through the analysis process. It was this critical self-reflection that made me wonder whether I could orientalise and conversely, whether the organisations might be orientalising as well. It made me revisit the data and I began to notice certain little threads of orientalism occurring within the narratives in Islamic Relief and in one of the feminist-informed organisations (F1) but less so in the third organisation, particularly the one that was exploring Islamic feminism and queer theories and queer identities (F2). This then made me reflect; if I am the other, if I am a subaltern, how could I be orientalising? It made me wonder whether this meant this could be a form of re-orientalism. This led me to explore whether there might be a concept such as re-orientalism. In doing, so I came across the work of Lisa Lau (2009) who I have already discussed in chapter four. This then opened up new ways of exploring the experiences and the mechanisms of the orientalist discourse, which I intend to explore further in the empirical chapters, about Islamic Relief.

The imprints of this journey are what I will explore in more detail in sections three and four of this chapter when I describe the research data collection process and the data analysis process informing the final iteration of the thesis. However, before I explain why I chose a case study design and how Islamic Relief fits into this process, I offer some additional information about the original sample selection and data utilised, which informed the previous iterations of the

research project. Based on the details outlined above, I provide additional context on the inclusions and exclusions to the full sample and dataset.

In the next section below, I disclose details of the full sample, location, number of participants, organisations, and the stages of exclusion and inclusion of the sample during the various stages and iterations of the research project. From there, I outline the different stages of the data collection process, including recruitment of participants through the gatekeeper, and the various stages of interviewing from pre-interview to formal interviewing, before providing a brief account of the different phases of data collection, analysis, the refocusing of the study and the impact of the inclusions and exclusion on the study. From there, I move into the specificity of the methodology and methods used for this thesis, specific to IR as the case study.

THE SAMPLE SELECTION AND DATA UTILISED IN THIS THESIS

The Gender Justice Policy was launched in April 2015. The interviews, therefore, covered and captured: a) the timeline between 2014 to 2018 at IR; b) the faith actors' orientated approaches to gender and development during the turn to religion period within the development sector (Tomalin 2020); c) the faith actors lived experiences and approaches of working within the gender-development-religion nexus, in the context of the geopolitical period of the War on Terror as an international Muslim development organisation (in the UK).

For now, I will set out further details about the interviews and how they were conducted. To start with, I will focus on the whole data set, and then focus more specifically on IR. In this section, I will discuss how the participants were

recruited, the role of gatekeepers, the pre-interview process, interview arrangements, issues around interview dynamics, and the formal elements of conducting the interview. In the last section, I will then discuss some of the issues around the two phases of data analysis and utilisation of interview data in this thesis more specifically to IR.

The Interviews

Twenty-two interviews were conducted across four different organisations between November 2017 and July 2018 as part of the data collection phase of the study. Of the twenty-two interviews conducted, a total of seven interviews are included in the final thesis. These seven interviews are specifically related to Islamic Relief.

When the decision was made to reduce the study to one case study organisation, namely, Islamic Relief, the interview data from the remaining organisations were left unused in the thesis. This means that in terms of unused data, fifteen interviews were excluded across all four organisations, including two from Islamic Relief. The table below provides a breakdown of the four organisations; the total number of interviewees per organisation; when the interviews were conducted; the geographical location of where the interviewees were located across the UK per organisation; and a breakdown by gender and faith/religion of the interviewees as per organisation.

Table 1: Breakdown of interviewees for the whole project as per organisation

Organisation	Total number of interviewees per organisation	When the interviews were conducted	Where the interviews were conducted	Breakdown by gender of participants	Breakdown by faith/religion of participants
Islamic Relief	9	November 2017 to May 2018	Birmingham and London	5 females 4 males	8 Muslim 1 Hindu
National Zakat Foundation	5	February 2018 to April 2018	London and Manchester	3 females 2 males	5 Muslim
Inclusive Mosque Initiative	6	March 2018 to May 2018	London, Coventry, and Bristol	6 females	6 Muslim
Muslim Women's Network UK	2	June 2018 to July 2018	Birmingham	2 females	2 Muslim

Sample and Locations

National Zakat Foundation (NZF): Five interviews were conducted with employees holding project, policy, and senior executive positions. Interviews took place mostly in London, with one in Manchester. The sample included both male and female participants of Muslim heritage, primarily of South Asian

descent. All the interviews were held at the organisation's head office in London, excluding one, in Manchester, which was held in a café, as the member of the staff worked remotely. All the interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis and in person.

Inclusive Mosque Initiative (IMI): Six interviews were conducted with trustees who held voluntary roles in the organisation, this included three who were based in London, of the remaining three, who all lived outside of London, two were based in Bristol and one in Coventry. All participants identified as female and of Muslim heritage, with diverse ethnic backgrounds. Interviews were held in various venues, as the organisation did not have a physical building. The venues included participants' homes, cafes, work locations, and hotel dining areas. All the interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis and in person.

Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK): Two interviews were held in Birmingham with senior policy leaders within the organisation, both female and of South Asian Muslim heritage. The interviews were held at the organisation's head office, in Birmingham. All the interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis and in person.

Islamic Relief (IR): Initially nine interviews were conducted. Seven of the nine were directly employed by the organisation, held senior policy-level roles, and were directly involved with the formal introduction of gender into the organisation and involved with the faith-literacy project at IR resulting in the development of the Gender Justice Policy. Six of the seven interviews with staff who were employed by IR were conducted on a one-to-one basis in person, at

the organisation's head office in Birmingham, and one staff member was interviewed online, via Skype. The remaining interviewees were two independent agents who were interviewed in London, at their office, on a one-to-one basis and in person. The overall sample included five who identified as female, four who identified as male, all but one who identified as of Muslim heritage, and one who identified as Hindu. Of the nine interviewees, all but two were of South Asian heritage, whilst two were of White/European heritage.

The inclusion and exclusion of interviewees from the dataset at IR

Pre-data collection phase – inclusions and exclusions

In the initial interview schedule proposed to IR during the early iteration of the research project, a total of thirty interviews had been requested. This included members from the Board of Trustees, Board of Directors, Heads of Departments, and Islamic Scholars who had been part of the Islamic Advisory Group and had provided Islamic guidance during the development of the Gender Justice Policy. The schedule also included the seven interviewees who were included in the final data set. This schedule had been potentially agreed upon during the initial phase of the research project when IR had been the single case study, and the focus of the study had been on IRs Islamic faith-based approach to gender mainstreaming.

However, when IR rescinded their full commitment to the research project resulting in a change in direction in both the research study and design and the inclusion of the other three organisations, the initial proposed schedule of interviewees was severely curtailed. Although IR, agreed, in an attempt to maintain goodwill, and after a long period of negotiations, that I could continue

with some aspects of data collection, namely the interviews, I was left with a smaller sample, the seven who now form the data set used in the thesis.

Data collection phase – inclusions and exclusions

Inclusion of additional interviewees at IR

During the data collection period, a further two interviews were undertaken with independent agents (Islamic scholars), these two interviews were an add-on, as suggested by one of the main interviewees, the two participants lived in London. That is to say, these add-on interviews at IR were included after the agreed list of seven on the interview schedule with the organisation prior to the start of the interview period. The two independent agents were Imams (Islamic scholars, one male, and one female, who were a married couple), who had participated in a gender advocacy campaign for IR, at the time of the data collection. They were, therefore, not involved with the organisation directly before the initial period nor the launch of the Gender Justice Policy.

However, their involvement with a gender campaign during the latter phase of the data collection coincided with two key factors: The first was that the data collection period sat in the timeline of the post-launch and implementation phase of the Gender Justice Policy, and the second was the change in the iteration of this research study, which led to the inclusion of the two add-on interviewees. It was suggested (by one of the main interviewees from the originally agreed schedule) that two potential interviewees could offer expertise as Islamic scholars based in the UK. The two who were involved in a then-current IR gender advocacy campaign, and, were therefore able to provide an

Islamic scholarly input in how IR worked within the nexus of gender-religion-development.

The iteration of the study, at the time of the whole data collection phase, had been focused on how faith-based organisations worked within the boundaries of the sacred, wherein two of the organisations were mobilising knowledge from an Islamic feminist epistemology and two, including IR, were not, rather they were mobilising within the epistemology of the Islamic Tradition. At the time of the data collection (which was after the Gender Justice Policy had been launched and had been operationalised by IR) and subsequently, due to the research project's new iteration towards how religious knowledge is mobilised by religious subjects who choose to work within an Islamic framework, I felt that these interviews would offer useful insight. This was why these interviews were bolted on.

The final sample selection and data utilised in this thesis

The final sample at IR and the data utilised in this thesis is, therefore, focused on seven senior staff members directly involved in gender policy and advocacy. Interviews spanned from November 2017 to May 2018, reflecting both pre- and post-policy development periods, thereby offering a retrospective account of the process that IR and the faith actors in development underwent during the historical and political period in which the organisation and showing how these faith actors navigated the tricky terrain of exploring changing narratives around gender, development, and re-orientalism in the context of the War On Terror and development's turn to religion.

Now, I will set out further details about the interviews and how they were conducted. I start by focusing on the whole dataset and then focus more specifically on IR. I will discuss how the participants were recruited, the role of gatekeepers, the pre-interview process, interview arrangements, issues around interview dynamics, and the formal elements of conducting the interview. I will then discuss some of the issues around the phases of data analysis and utilisation of interview data in this thesis to IR more specifically.

Recruitment through Gatekeepers

Participants for this study were identified through gatekeepers within each participating organisation. Gatekeepers played a crucial role in facilitating access to potential interviewees, providing initial introductions via email. These introductions allowed the researcher to arrange individual interviews through further email or telephone communication. The role of gatekeepers was primarily administrative, ensuring logistical arrangements such as room bookings at Islamic Relief (IR) and the National Zakat Foundation (NZF). After the initial introductions and administrative support, gatekeepers did not participate further in the interview process.

Pre-Interview Process

Upon establishing contact with interviewees, each participant received an electronic copy of the information sheet and consent form. The information sheet detailed the study's title, background, aims, and the interview process. Ethical considerations were emphasized, including confidentiality, the option to withdraw, and the right to review and discuss interview transcripts. Interviewees

were given the choice to receive a copy of their interview transcript for their records.

Interview Arrangements

Interviews were scheduled based on mutual availability, facilitated by reminders sent by the researcher. For IR, gatekeepers helped secure interview commitments by sending reminders to interviewees. In other organisations, the researcher managed reminders personally. Interviews were conducted in various UK locations: Birmingham, London, Coventry, Bristol, and Manchester. Out of 22 interviews, all but one were conducted in person; the exception was conducted online via Skype.

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS

Consent

Interviews began with a project introduction and distribution of hard copies of the information sheet and consent form. The hard copy of the information sheet and the consent form included the ethical rules and regulations of the University of Birmingham concerning confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were asked to read the documentation, ask questions, and confirm their understanding and consent. Once it was established that the interviewee had understood the information and that the data would be used for the purpose of this PhD study only, including future publications and presentations, and they consented to be part of the study they were asked to sign the consent form, and I did the same. Interviewees were given the information sheet to keep, I collected a copy of the consent form and a further scanned copy of the consent form was sent to the interviewee with a copy of the interview transcript for the

interviewees' records, along with a thank you letter for their participation in the study, after the interview was completed.

Once consent forms were collected, interviews proceeded, with participants being reassured of confidentiality and anonymity. All participants agreed to audio recordings of their interviews, without exception.

The interviews were held one-on-one. Before beginning the interview, I started with a preamble, to ease and create rapport with the interviewees. I reiterated confidentiality and anonymity. Before informing them that the interview was an opportunity to gain valuable insight into contemporary conversations around the key themes of the study, namely gender, gender justice, and the lived experiences of Muslims working within Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) in the UK context who were exploring these issues within an Islamic paradigm and through a faith-lens. As such, there were no wrong or right answers, rather it was to hear their voices. Further, although I had a list of questions the aim was to hear about their experiences and the questions were a guide for me to steer the conversation. Once I felt that the interviewee seemed comfortable, I sought permission to begin the recording and began with the opening question and led them through the interview.

Interview dynamics

There were notable differences between the interviewee-interviewer dynamics across all four organisations. For example, at NZF and IR the gender dynamics of a female interviewee interviewing male participants in terms of Muslim-on-Muslim research, added a different dimension (which will be discussed further in

this chapter) compared to interviewing female to female Muslim-on-Muslim research, at IMI and MWNUK.

Another interviewee-interviewer dynamic particular to IR, which was different to the other three organisations, was that the interviews were centred around the development of the GJP and the key themes of the study. At the time of the data collection, the GJP had gone live, and IR had become more settled into advocacy work on gender. The interviewees were therefore offering a retrospective of their experience. This meant the participants were less defensive compared to when I first began the study with them and their suspicions and defensiveness towards the research study, which had originally resulted in the organisation (IR) pulling out of their commitment to support the study when IR had been the only case study.

When the study had to be expanded, due to IR's withdrawal and lack of cooperation to support the data collection phase and original research design, the scramble to develop a new iteration of the study led to the inclusion of the additional three organisations. Despite my attempts to be transparent and build rapport and relationships within each of the three new organisations, there were occasions when issues of defensiveness and suspicion arose within the interviewee-interviewer dynamics.

The interviews – formal elements of the interviews

The more formal elements of the interviews began with a broad question asking them to tell me about their role within the organisation and about themselves. I went on to ask more open-ended semi-structured questions about gender, gender justice, faith, knowledge, and Muslim British identities. I was careful to

ensure that I did not define concepts for example terms like gender, gender justice, and faith. This was deliberate as I did not want to impose any specific definition (I will discuss why I did this later in the chapter in the section on the analysis process in the main section of the chapter which is especially about IR and this thesis).

I often used prompts to follow up on answers and to encourage participants to expand and or return to a part of the interview or a point that may have been raised by the interviewee. All the participants spoke at great length and provided detailed information and answers to the questions, which often meant probes were used specifically to pick up on one point rather than all the points that were raised by the interviewee. This proved challenging within the moment to pick which points to probe further. All the interviews lasted between one to one and three-quarters of an hour.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data collection was completed by July 2018, with analysis commencing in April 2021. Due to an extended leave of absence, the sample size was reduced based on relevance to the study's focus. This included excluding NZF data and two independent agents from IR, reducing the sample to 15 interviews across IR, MWNUK, and IMI. This adjustment impacted the gender balance and representation of mainstream versus feminist-inspired Muslim organisations in the sample.

Data Analysis Phases and Utilisation of Interviews

The research project involved two distinct phases of data analysis, each affecting the use of the interviews conducted:

Phase One: Initial Analysis (April 2021)

During the initial analysis phase in April 2021, the focus was on a subset of the collected interviews. Specifically:

Excluded Data: Interviews from the National Zakat Foundation (NZF), totalling five interviews, and two out of the nine interviews from Islamic Relief (IR) were excluded.

Included Data: This left a total of fifteen interviews from three organisations: Islamic Relief (seven interviews), Inclusive Mosque Initiative (six interviews), and Muslim Women's Network UK (two interviews).

This phase aimed to narrow down the data to a manageable and relevant subset for initial analytical purposes.

Phase Two: Refocusing the Study (October 2023)

In the second phase, a further reduction was made in October 2023 when the research project was refocused to emphasize a particular case, IR. This decision led to:

Further Exclusions: Out of the previously analysed fifteen interviews, eight more were excluded from the final thesis analysis.

Final Focus: The final empirical findings and analysis chapters centred on only seven interviews from Islamic Relief (IR).

Impact of Excluded Interviews

Even though eight interviews were excluded in the final analysis phase, they played a significant role in shaping the study:

Informing Analysis: The insights gained from these interviews influenced the preliminary analysis and theoretical framework development.

Theoretical Contribution: These interviews helped refine the research questions and the overall understanding of the gender integration and advocacy processes within Muslim humanitarian organisations.

Having briefly discussed the various phases of data collection, analysis, sample size and data utilised in the different stages and iterations of the research project, in the above section. In the remainder of the chapter, I turn more specifically to IR as the main case study that informs this thesis. Inevitably, there will be some overlap that will occur with the above details outlined. I begin this section of the chapter by detailing the choice to use a case study.

RESEARCH DESIGN: THE CASE STUDY APPROACH

This PhD research project is based on a case study approach (Zainal 2007, Baxter and Jack 2008, Algozzine and Hancock 2017, Thomas 2019). A case study approach is, according to Gary Thomas (2019:3), about the particular, rather than the general, it uncovers the ‘uniqueness’ of any phenomena in its ‘completeness’ thereby allowing you to look at the intricate details of the study of one case, from many and varied angles. In undertaking an ‘ascending analysis of power’ as suggested by Foucault, to explore the micro-level of

society (Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007:37), the case study approach is a good fit.

A case study can be an institution, an event, or a period in time (Thomas 2019). This case study fits into all three. In undertaking an ascending analysis of power (Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007, Hartsock 2013) through the location of faith actors' experiences within an Islamic Faith-based organisation in the UK, namely, Islamic Relief, then fits into the category of an institution. Next, in exploring faith actors' experiences of developing a Gender Justice Policy through the mobilisation of religious knowledge, this becomes an event. Finally, setting the temporality of the project within the turn to religion (Tomalin 2020) in development discourse is a time. As a researcher, I opted for the case study approach as it offers the possibility to study this subject from multiple perspectives, thereby recognising the complexities and the uniqueness of the faith actors' experiences within their project, their location, the context of their institution, the event, and the period in a 'real-life context' (Thomas 2019:10).

As this is a qualitative research project, and I have chosen a case study approach, the two methods of data collection used in this project are (i) the semi-structured interview, as the primary source of data collection, and (ii) the analysis of the Gender Justice Policy, as the secondary source.

The Interviewing Process

The sample selection and data used in this case, interview dynamics, qualitative interviewing, and the interviewees will be discussed in this section.

Interview dynamics

The main aim of this section is to draw attention to some of the challenges encountered within this research project when undertaking qualitative interviewing during a Muslim-on-Muslim social science research project. In drawing on the researcher's experiences of working within feminist and anthropological reflexive approaches to fieldwork practice. I draw particular attention to how the insider-outsider positionality of the researcher's biography had implications on the methodological practice. In using an ascending analysis approach, I examine the micro-level of interview dynamics to examine the power relations and gender dynamics that were enacted throughout the data collection period. I draw on Foucauldian interpretations of the body and lived experiences to explore power relations, identity, and the body of the individual researcher (Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007).

I aim to highlight how social science research techniques of domination, in pursuit of knowledge on the object of study, are enacted through the researcher who in the pursuit to be the ideal researcher (objective, neutral, rigorous, and ethical) may use disciplinary techniques through self-surveillance, before, during, and after the interview encounter and how these techniques may continue to (re)produce the 'docile' bodies of researchers.

That is to say, whilst feminist and anthropological reflexive approaches attempt to resist disciplinary techniques and panoptic arrangements, this researcher experienced a conflict between attempting to undertake the neutral role of the 'researcher' with a more 'reflexive embodied empathy' (Finlay 2005), in which the mirroring of bodily presence and action, including voice, language, and

dress during the interview encounter revealed how gender and faith were enacted during the interview.

These enactments of the intersection of categories of identities revealed in the embodied presentation of self during the fieldwork process, particularly through the researchers' choice of dress – wherein an 'interview uniform' (Arendell 1997) became more than just an interview 'prop' (Goffman 1959) – it became the mechanism through which the researcher became an instrument in the field (Golafshani 2003, Stewart 2010, Chenail 2011). Drawing on fieldwork experiences of the interview dynamics and the use of anthropological and feminist reflexivity during the fieldwork practice and analysis process to question and challenge intra-individual identity constructs (Stewart 2010:292) and biases throughout the fieldwork practice I reveal some of the gaps in my research training generally and specifically within the fields of anthropology and development. In examining and revealing the silent category of faith and religious subjectivities, I offer a nuanced account of the complexities, dynamics, and fluidity of multiple identities; as well as, how power is contested and dispersed (Arendell, 1997; Pini 2005), during, and after the interview encounter and what this means for the knowledge that is produced, and this is an original contribution of the project.

Feminist intersectionality and postcolonial critical theory, in light of orientalism, have questioned the lack of ethical research practices and the power differentials between the objects of research and the researcher within the knowledge production of the past (Spivak 1985, Neilson 2021). Religion and the religious subjectivities of the researcher and researched are still an

intersectional category that remains silenced and underexplored in terms of ethical consideration and researcher training. And yet, as I will show, it can come into play within interview encounters revealing power relations and gender dynamics. In chapter four, I highlighted how despite the ‘turn to religion’ (Tomalin 2021) development discourses continue to view religion as something that happens over there. I also problematised the term faith actors for failing to recognise the religious subject. In employing a feminist researcher reflexivity to this research project, I not only reveal how the researcher’s role in the interview encounter generally but more specifically in terms of identity categories like faith and gender may have impacted the research encounter. I reveal how silent intersectional categories of identities like faith alongside gender can shift throughout the research process and during the interview encounter, influence research design, impact the analysis process, and shape the production of knowledge.

Qualitative interviewing

The ‘interview’ or qualitative interviewing (King and Horrocks 2010) is a key method used by feminist social science researchers for qualitative data gathering (Reinharz and Davidman 1992, Cassell 2005). Part of its appeal is that its active involvement enables participants to construct data about their own lives, offering the researcher access to participants’ ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words (Reinharz 1992:18; Kvale 1996; DeVault et al 2007). What is more, the qualitative interview is also said to provide the context in which social values and cultural practices can be recorded, contested, performed, and reinforced (Oakley 1998; Broom et al 2009:52).

Semi-structured interviews do provide the researcher with both a degree of flexibility and the opportunity to engage in a face-to-face encounter with the research participant(s) who will inform the research project, in a real-world context (Reinharz 1992; Gillham 2005; DeVault et al 2007). In other words, the qualitative interview context allows exploring the enactment of interpersonal dynamics and social categories, including femininity and masculinity (Broom, Hand et al. 2009), as a form of situated knowledge (Haraway 1988).

One particular area of debate is whether the pursuit of reliability and validity within qualitative research can ensure that researchers can generate data which is based on the 'subjective meanings and perceptions of the subject' (Krefting 1991 :214; Gillham 2005). This is something that feminist scholarship has sought to address, first through the use of a reflexive and relational approach to the overall research process (see Ackerly and True 2010 feminist research ethics); and second by suggesting that a 'different language is needed to fit the qualitative view', with new terms such as 'credibility, accuracy of representation and authority of the writer' (Krefting 1991:215).

For some feminist researchers, this further ethical consideration has centred on how they then use the data collected to produce knowledge (King and Horrocks 2010) and make 'truth' claims (see hooks 1992 for black women; Narayan 1993 for native/insider; and Reay 1996 for working-class white women's voices). In other words, if qualitative research is the 'study of the empirical world from the viewpoint of the person under study' (Schmid 1981 quoted in Krefting 1991:214), as qualitative researchers, our goal must be to responsibly understand the subjective meaning and perceptions of the subject, including

‘using ourselves as a research instrument...so as to experience our research both “intellectually and emotionally”’ (Dickson-Swift, James et al. 2009 :62).

Interview dynamics as embodied practice

In acknowledging emotions, we also accept that qualitative research is an embodied practice in which the researcher must learn to sit, walk, talk, stand, and dress anew and in doing so reveal how ‘culturally loaded different uses of the body can be’ (Okley 2007 :68). This is particularly important when researchers enter into an interview situation which, generally, entails a physical engagement within a spatial environment that while unfamiliar to the researcher is the social and political context within which the participants may construct and enact their lived realities (I will explore this when I discuss embodied relationships during the interview encounters later in this section). Here, the researcher then carries into the fieldwork practice: ‘a personal and an ethnographic self’ (Narayan 1993:681). As Narayan states: ‘we belong to worlds both the personal and professional whether in the field or at home’. In other words, when researchers enter into the fieldwork process they are entering into ‘an embodied spatial practice’ (Clifford 1997:53) which is a dynamic process (Lisiak 2015) full of interpersonal dynamics (Broom, Hand et al. 2009) and, intersubjective relationships (Finlay 2005) that are part of the embodied experience and performance of the qualitative researcher; and, this is particularly so in the case of qualitative interviewing (Broom, Hand et al. 2009, Ezzy 2010).

Emotions

While the research participants' response is detailed or included in fieldwork practice and data analysis, the emotional reaction of the researcher is largely unreported (Dickson-Swift, James et al. 2009:64). Yet, when the research topic is personal (to the researcher) or (Etherington 2004) one in which a reflexive researcher recognises the impact of their own beliefs, experiences, culture, and history has a potentially emotional-generating situation for them (and on the participant) and thereby impacts on the process and outcome. The value of this emotional experience can result in a greater depth of experience, analysis, and 'rapport' (Oakley 1981, Duncombe and Jessop 2002, Dickson-Swift, James et al. 2009). Thus, a reflexive embodied approach enables the researcher to better 'hear the voices and experiences of the research' participants (Ezzy 2010:169).

In this way, the research participant shifts from the category of an 'object', the 'other', and into the subject, engaged in the co-construction of shared meaning with the researcher. Whereby both parties are engaged in a mutually constitutive approach to research (Stewart 2010:293). In which, traditional power dynamics within the research relationship are and can be challenged. Here, traditional hierarchical positions and power dynamics within the interview process are reframed into a non-hierarchical relationship, with the researcher investing their own identity in the relationship (Oakley 1981). Within this interactive process, the meaning is co-constructed within the framework of the interview and both the interviewee and interviewer are actively interpreting and constructing the process (Cassell 2005:168). In other words, the researcher and research participant enter into an interactive dialectical relationship, in which the 'self' is, therefore, also, the primary research instrument (Ardenell 1997:343).

Furthermore, a subjective bodily experience enables a better understanding of the lived experience of the research participant's world (Okely 2007). Or to put it another way, whether or not the researcher deliberately engages with their own and the research participants' emotions or embodied experience, it is, nevertheless, part of, and ever-present within the process. The adoption of a reflexive and relational approach brings these nuances into the fieldwork practice and provides an enriched analysis process.

In reflecting on my fieldwork practice, I used disciplinary techniques and self-surveillance to be careful of how I behaved and performed in the interview process/fieldwork practice and these experiences were multiple and layered. In my case, this included how I physically re/presented myself, such as dress (which will be discussed later in this section when I discuss the interview uniform), the language used in framing the interview questions, such as using specialist terminology from within Islamic discourses or in excluding terms for examples from feminist discourses. I monitored and policed the 'self' in terms of the embodied nature of culturally appropriate gender dynamics between male and female interactions within the interview process; both ethically and technically (which I discuss in the sections on cross-gender interviewing further down in this section).

In other words, there are multiple stresses in the fieldwork practice which are often based on the multiplex of 'differences' and intersecting categories of difference that are embodied within the researcher and the research participants' identities – including the emotional (interpersonal) and the technical processes of conducting social research interviews. All of which the

researcher has to negotiate within the fieldwork practice, often with little to guide them and in the moment. I often found that trying to balance the objectives of scientific research techniques with subjective experiences, particularly during the interview stage resulted in an 'unspoken inner or self-dialogue' (Ardenell 1997:342) or an induced professional schizophrenia (Mascarenhas-Keyes 2011).

The interviewees

The 'elite' interview

In 'elite' interviewing there are multiple power dimensions that require consideration (Smith 2006 , Conti and O'Neil 2007, Glas 2021 , Ntienjom Mbohhou and Tomkinson 2022). One such power dimension, in terms of studying up, relates to the difference in knowledge between the interviewer and the interviewee. A sample consisting of elite interviewees will involve talking to people who are particularly knowledgeable about key areas of the research topic or about the context within which the research is being conducted (Gillham 2005). An elite sample would, therefore, be a highly sophisticated subject group. By virtue of their understanding and experience in their fields and the research topic, they would be in positions of authority and power. Indeed, they would know more than I (the researcher) on particular areas, such as religious interpretations, and religious or technical terms. They may even be subject specialists. This authoritative understanding of the subject by the interviewee may result in power differences in knowledge and understanding.

What is more, an elite interviewee would perhaps be attuned to the implication not only of the questions being asked of them but also in the answers that they provide, and, how such responses may have implications for themselves and their position, their organisation and its (wider cultural-political) position, and even on wider discourses in the topic. Indeed, their answers may be framed within the basis of these wider discourses, which the researcher would not be aware of due to a lack of membership within the same networks in which these individuals and organisations operate. This may have implications for the analysis process in as much as the interview process. In terms of this study, the interview approach included conducting elite interviews and troubles the power dynamic between the researched and the researcher, which this subsection will unpack.

Elite interviewees: power and knowledge

In such situations, when there may be a difference in specialist knowledge, the power dynamics can imply how new knowledge is being constructed and co-constructed by both the interviewer and interviewee within the interview process (Cassell 2005). In the case of my sample, many of my participants were attuned to how social 'reality' is constructed along cultural, economic, social, and political lines. Most were particularly aware of the political and cultural sensitivities of the subject topic(s) of this research project, including the contestations, contradictions, and challenges around 'gender' and 'Islam'. One of the implications of this awareness of the political and cultural sensitivities might be that answers may have been presented from a safe position (Gillham 2005). That is not to say that participants in my study had stock answers or thwarted

the process, but rather, that they were perhaps more adept at *managing* both the interview as a process and in *managing* the production of knowledge. This meant that I was unaware of when interviewees might be managing the process of the interview or managing the production of knowledge, as in providing safe answers.

Linn Egeberg Holmgren (2011:367) makes the point that when interviewees are theoretically well-versed in a subject topic, as in her study, on pro-feminist men, there is a potential ‘...discursive closeness in understanding and talking about the subject of the interview.’ In the context of her study, as in mine, there are several politically and publicly contested concepts under discussion. However, without a shared language, one of the challenges I faced was when and whether to ask interviewees to define all the concepts used, especially with key contested terms such as ‘gender’, ‘Islam’, ‘equality’ and ‘justice’. The degree of confluence or intermeshing of professional common-sense knowledge between the interviewer and interviewee, which may occur during the interview (Hester and Francis 1994:691), posed another power dynamic before the interview encounter, even influencing the choice of research questions and research methods, and eventually impacted the analysis process, as I will discuss in the section on data analysis and analytical steps.

For example, despite an intention to ensure that this research project would provide a nuanced understanding of how contested concepts were defined, constructed, negotiated, and operationalised by those within the study, so as not to speak for them. The power dynamics of interviewing people across differences, such as elite professionals, who occupy positions of greater power

than the researcher can restrict such research ambitions. Subsequently, this results in methodological challenges including whether to frame questions within the context of political and or public discourse to employ a meta-language or to directly draw out such issues within the interview, where possible.

However, the fieldwork practice is full of constraints and limitations. Whilst the ambition had been to include an approach that would generate a nuanced set of definitions and meanings both at the level of the individual interviewee and organisational consensus, this approach was in the end excluded from the final interview guide in part due to time constraints, as each interview lasted between 45-90 minutes. Perhaps if the research project had been an in-depth ethnographic study this might have afforded me insight into unguarded moments or off-the-record conversations, to triangulate the interview experience with a more situated experience.

Furthermore, because the primary aim of the study had not centred on how these organisations defined these concepts but rather on understanding how these organisations contextualised the intersection of faith and gender to create meaning, policy, and practice; the definitions and meanings would have to be inferred through the prism of the interview and data analysis. Nevertheless, aware of the difficulties that an absence of definitions of terms may pose and the possibility of a common-sense shared language during the interviews, I had intended to send out a questionnaire to capture this information before the interview stage. However, this was not possible, as the sample was time-poor. As an alternative, each organisation was offered the option of taking part in a focus group, to explore these terms and triangulate meanings and group

consensus, as well as data. Again, the sample was unable to commit to this either due to a combination of both time and geographical restrictions, and all four organisations expressed a preference to engage in one-off interviews. This highlights how dependent researchers are on the research participants to collect high-quality data (Cassell 2005:174) and even in the design of research methods.

To mitigate the absence of a second layer of primary data and in attempting to triangulate the data methods, a review/analysis of organisational material relating to each organisation's policies and documentation on 'faith' and 'gender' was undertaken before the data collection phase, to inform the process. Later during the analysis stage, I drew on Laura Krefting's (1991:219) discussion on rigour in qualitative research to explore the use of 'theoretical triangulation'. 'Theoretical triangulation' means '...

that ideas from diverse or competing theories can be tested'. For example, triangulation of theory may occur in considering many concepts from anthropology, sociology, and psychology, in the conceptual interpretation of the experience or a phenomenon (Krefting 1991:219). In this research project, I then drew on the various thinking tools, discussed in chapter four.

Elite interviewees: challenges and dilemmas in the research relationship and knowledge construction

What is more, elite interviewees who are located in spaces in which they are considered leaders and authorities on key aspects of the subject topic hold a differential form of structural power to those of the researcher. That is to say, in

this situation, (feminist) methodological textbook advice, in which the researcher-researched power relations are premised on hierarchical and binary conceptualisations of an all-powerful and often Western/white/secular/female researcher who is studying down, continues to conceptualise power, gender, and social relations that are top-down and one-way processes (Thapar-Björkert and Henry 2004, Johnson 2014). For female researchers who are non-white and hold marginal positions within the different dominant and diasporic cultures they move in and out of, and who are studying up⁸¹; the research relationships encountered require the need to take into account the larger web of power relations that have to be negotiated (Mohanty 1988, Mohanty 1991, Narayan 1993, Puwar 1997, Smith 2006). Including, the tensions that arise when attempting to use feminist research values in interviewing elite participants, involving elite men (Conti and O'Neil 2007, Pacholok 2016).

The under-theorisation of the gender dynamic in researching elite men and women (Conti and O'Neil 2007) which reconceptualises power relations when studying up, serves only to highlight the basic techniques of disciplinary power within social science training that can result in feminist researchers having to go undercover (Pacholok 2016) or in my case, operate a feminism by stealth.

Equally, in the under-theorisation of methodological principles within feminist

⁸¹ I draw on the term 'studying up' and the work of Pacholock (2016) who explored the complexities of (and who attempted to) trouble the up/down dichotomy of studying elite males as a feminist and female researcher. In this case, I am using the term 'studying up' as my elite sample included both male and female experts in the field of Muslim knowledge production, who held positions and positionalities of power different to me, the researcher, particularly in the context of the UK. Furthermore, the different intersectional categories of the participants complicated the power dynamics, as the elite males and females occupied different social, cultural, race, gender, class, and even social capital to the researcher. Moreover, I was studying up in terms of religious subject status, as I classed the participants as 'embodied' religious subjects (but not myself, an equal in this term).

and development methodologies to support researchers who may have a degree of matching or share similarities and differences to their participants, as in Muslim-on-Muslim research, with elite Muslim women and Muslim men within the context of religious subjectivities, these dilemmas and challenges are often further silenced.

In this case study, the religious subjects were neither victims nor villains and similar to rapport building there is an ethical debate around 'faking friendships' in interviews to create 'rapport' (Duncombe and Jessop 2002). The faking of objectivity and Muslim rapport also posed an ethical conundrum for this researcher. When attempting to strike a balance between interview 'rapport' and deploying professional objective interview techniques, I often felt the line between these research objectives felt blurred and an unease would develop. I would tiptoe between various techniques and mechanical approaches to doing research, unsure as to where the lines were or whether I had painted over the lines, this often created an internalised anxiety. In the case of Muslim-on-Muslim research, Zubair, Martin et al. (2012:online version) describe how simply 'matching' intersectional categories between the researcher and the researched is not enough to ensure rapport within the fieldwork practice. Rather, they make a point to draw out the significance of 'different presentations of the researcher's embodied 'self' to the types of research relationships that emerge in the fieldwork processes employed' (Zubair, Martin et al. 2012:online version). I will exemplify this in the context of this case study when I discuss the interview uniform, which will follow on from this discussion.

In the case of studying up (Johnson 2014, Pacholok 2016), power relations pose several dilemmas in terms of the interviewee-interviewer relationship (which I exemplify further in this section). Moreover, the organisations within this project were considered as established authorities in their specific speciality areas of charity, humanitarian development, or gender, and women's rights within their fields. This meant that the participants in this case study would have a nuanced lexicon and understanding of the subject topic. This posed a dilemma in terms of my positionality, as I would not be the 'expert' researcher in this relationship. Add to this, the dynamics posed by my biography, in occupying various intersectional categories, meant that embodying the role of the 'researcher' would require balancing various subjectivities. Furthermore, due to the potential dual processes of interview matching and interviewing across differences, based on the cross-cutting 'similarities' and 'differences' between the research participants and the researcher, the dilemma of whether to take an objective, subjective, or neutral interviewing role became a key question before the fieldwork practice started.

Indeed, feminist research methodology (and anthropological and development methodology) are keen to emphasise concerns over the unequal and hierarchical research relationship and situating issues of power as significant to feminist research projects (Oakley 1981, Oakley 1998, Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002, Potter and Desai 2006, Johnson 2014, Oakley 2016). Whilst feminist methodology has highlighted the marginal status of the researched as vulnerable to exploitation (Johnson 2014) this presumed assumption of the 'oppressed victimhood' of the participants by the all-powerful researcher

(Thapar-Björkert and Henry 2004 :363) in an 'up/down binary' (Pacholok 2016) within these research relationships has equally been problematised.

That is to say, feminist researchers who interview across differences, for example, research projects that 'study up' as in elite groups (men and women) (Puwar 1997, Conti and O'Neil 2007, Johnson 2014); or across gender, where female researchers interview (elite) men (Lee 1997, Conti and O'Neil 2007, Pacholok 2016); or where non-white female researchers interview across cultures that are non-white and non-western in which the female researcher is not part of the dominant group and culture (Thapar-Björkert and Henry 2004:364), conclude that researchers can also be exploited, manipulated, and objectified.

To put it simply, models of power that are constructed as hierarchical and unidirectional in which there are pure oppressors or victims (Collins 1989, Collins 2000, Trahan 2011, Pacholok 2016, Collins 2022) not only diminish the power of the participant as an active agent, it can also cause epistemic violence (Spivak 1988) by (re)producing and re-presenting essentialising categories. This not only fails to recognise that people's identities lie in the intersectionality of a multiplex of categories, but it also then treats categories as demographic characteristics, for example, race, class, and gender, become isolated, independent variables (Trahan 2011).

For feminist researchers and those who are exploring interviewing across differences and are in marginal positionalities themselves, the appropriation of normative power structures that are static becomes cul-de-sacs in which

knowledge production can result in epistemic violence. A fluid, shifting, and capillary form of understanding of power, enables different forms of resistance to be understood as an expression of power (Feder 2014:61) and thereby reconceptualise binary constructions of power in which the researcher is then neither an insider nor outsider and at times may also be located as both in relations to those being interviewed (Thapar-Björkert and Henry 2004:369).

Turning now to the interviews, I start with a fairly extensive discussion of the interview uniform, which I use as the micro-level of analysis to explore power relations and gender dynamics within Muslim-on-Muslim interviewing in this case study.

Interviewing across differences when doing Muslim-on-Muslim social research

The Interview Uniform

The Panopticon acts as a mechanism for the subjection and self-subjection of its inmates through a sense of their constant visibility that compels them to organise their behaviour in line with its power mechanism (Hoffman 2014:34) (Foucault 2016). What is missing is any form of violence or force, rather it is the visibility that is facilitated by the spatial arrangements that lead the inmates to be the very 'conduits of the power mechanism embodied in the panopticon' (Hoffman 2014:34). The panopticon architectural feature that I was enacting was: i) that of concept of female 'modesty' within the discourse of gender and

Islam; and ii) adoption of clothing as a 'prop' within the field, to play a part⁸².

That is to say, the researcher's 'dress' can be as relevant to the fieldwork practice as the design of the interview questions. In other words, 'soft' methodological considerations, such as dress, tone of voice, and the 'embodied spatial practices' (Clifford 1997:203) which are inherent within qualitative research sites are as relevant as the 'hard' methodological considerations within the research practice; and, make them worthy of inclusion in fieldwork design and practice.

For this case study, I adopted a form of dress policing and interview uniform⁸³, but unlike Deborah Lee (1997), I had not considered it as a deterrent from sexual advances in the field. That is to say, I had internalised a panoptic

⁸² The performance and presentation of the 'self' during social interactions Goffman, E. (1959). 'The Presentation of Self in.' Butler, Bodies that Matter.

'props', such as clothing, provide the researcher with the opportunity to influence, to a degree, local attitudes by adopting particular habits of costume Mascarenhas-Keyes, S. (2010). Colonialism, Migration and the International Catholic Goan Community, Goa 1556.

⁸³ Deborah Lee (1997:559), who reflects on her own experience of interviewing male research-participants on sexual harassment in the workplace. Lee (1997:555) draws attention to issues of control, rapport, and reciprocity during the interview encounter, including issues such as safety and the role of dress. In her paper, Lee (1997) reflects on how she had to alter her appearance during the interview as part of a safety strategy by focusing on her own clothing. She describes the adoption of an 'interview uniform' which she wore for the majority of her interviews. This 'dress policing' (Lee 1997:559) Lee claims had been in order to avoid a negative sexualization of her gendered identity by her male research participants. While for Zubair, Martin et al (2012) the advantages and limitations posed by the female researcher's adoption of a traditional, non-threatening, feminine Pakistani identity ensured access and acceptance into the socio-spatial and gendered cultural milieus. For Lee (1997), however, the dilemmas and vulnerabilities that arise from a certain performance of feminine identity posed problematic.

schema on gendered forms of representation of the 'self' within two different but parallel discourses that can be used whenever a task or behaviour is to be imposed (Hoffman 2014:35) when dealing with a multiplicity of individuals. Rather, my main criteria had been that my 'interview uniform' would meet with the faith-cultural norms of the research community and the environment I would be entering, different professional Muslim organisations. So, although I did not explicitly frame myself in terms of my gender category – the feminine – nor in terms of a faith/religion category – a Muslim – I had, however, implicitly drawn me into an identity narrative that situated me into a unitary category in which the two became one - the 'Muslimwoman' (Cooke 2008). In the context of the interview and the fieldwork, I had located my identity in the discourse on women in Islam based on meeting assumptions around female modesty within the intersection of faith and gender identities. In particular, the narrative I had located the 'self' in, or rather, I would present in the fieldwork, would be one that would conform to the Islamic concept of female modesty, in terms of defining modesty as based on the body and performed externally, rather than as modesty held internally (Mahmood 2011:23). To an extent I was orientalising the organisations, specifically the organisations who had both male and female staff and re-orientalising myself⁸⁴.

⁸⁴ Anthropological studies with their long-standing tradition of exploring the 'exotic', have, however, been occupied with the exotic habitus and habits of the 'other' (Clifford 1997). Here, for example, 'cross-dressing' by an ethnographer, who takes on the dress of those under the lens, has been part of the process in many anthropological studies (Clifford 1997). This phenomenon of 'cross-dressing' by Western researchers are often found in relation to the exotic habitus of Muslim

As an 'insider' the notion of female modesty within both South-Asian and Muslim cultural traditions alongside the faith and gendered embodied presentation of the self from a feminine perspective of the cross-section of these identities was something I was familiar with. As such, while the notion of modesty dressing was not entirely alien to me, I did nevertheless question whether I would need to consider performing modesty dressing to facilitate the interview process. In questioning my perceptions and assumptions I knew I was challenging my own and the participants' biases of whether I would be accepted as a Muslim and therefore an 'insider' by the interviewees. In locating myself in the intra-categories of these identities I had then inserted myself as an instrument into the study.

Thus, if I choose not to cross-dress or rather intra-dress in terms of modesty would I alienate myself from the sample or in viewing the process as cross-dressing was, I situating myself as an 'outsider'? And, as such I had located myself in terms of this aspect of my Muslim identity as different from my research participants. In other words, I had framed myself as an inauthentic Muslim in comparison to my research participants. Thus, to meet an assumed

societies, where female, white, researchers have chosen to wear the veil in order to enter into the private spaces of the 'other' Fernea, E. W. (1965). Guests of the Sheik: An Ethnography of an Iraqi Village, Anchor.

expectation, and the common-sense notion, of a feminine-gendered Muslim identity I chose to develop a hybrid interview uniform. To this end, my interview uniform included wearing western smart suit-trousers with a jumper, both were loose fitting, a shawl, trainers (more for comfort and due to having to travel) with little make-up. My hair was tied back but loose and I did not wear a head covering, except on one occasion when I interviewed an Imam (a religious scholar) as a sign of respect.

I had intended this outfit would be used only during interviews held within non-feminist organisations but, on reflection, I felt that it would be better to maintain this as a constant throughout the fieldwork; to maintain consistency and record my reactions and experience of this approach. In maintaining this interview uniform throughout the entire fieldwork data collection, I was able to monitor how I negotiated the presentation of the 'self' during the fieldwork and whether there were any differences in how I viewed the use of the uniform or whether it influenced the participant's construction of my identity. While it is difficult to assess with any certainty how my interview uniform may have influenced the research participants' construction of my identity or to what degree the interview uniform may have impacted, facilitated aided entry, encouraged rapport or ensured insider acceptance of me, as a Muslim, during the interview encounter, I cannot say. What it did do was identify some of the conscious and unconscious gendered and faith assumptions that I, as the researcher, had carried with me into the room. And how self-disciplinary techniques were in operation thereby creating a self as a docile body based on the intellectual

cultural baggage, I was carrying with me into the fieldwork. I was enacting a Muslim orientalism (Hammer 2012, Grewal 2014).

On the one hand, this self-imposed 'dress policing' made me highly conscious of the complexities of my own identity and the impact of bringing 'baggage' into the interview process. While on the other hand, unconsciously this interview uniform was an attempt to enact a deliberate embodied performance of the intersection of my gender and faith (along with other) intersectional categories, as part of my presentation and performance of an acceptable 'self' in the specific context of the interview process. However, the significance of the performance of 'modesty' only came to light during the fieldwork as part of the post-interview self-reflexive practices.

Qualitative interviewing: 'faith' as a category and Muslim-on-Muslim dynamics of cross-gender interviews

There is a Prophetic saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad: 'No man is alone with a woman, but the Shaytaan is the third one present'. Within Islamic discourses, this saying has led to a ruling which recommends that men and women (who are unrelated) should not be alone together without a third person – such as a woman's male legal guardian – being present. This Islamic framework determines the parameters of male and female interactions in public and private spheres. Within the context of the interview process, the format of one-to-one interviews would, therefore, be at odds with this framework. This could be problematic within the context of my research where some of the samples would be practicing Muslim men, assuming that they operated within

this framework. Premised, however, on the notion that my sample included professional males (and females) who worked within organisations that employed both females and males, an assumption was made that one-to-one encounters between members of the opposite sex would be part of the working interactions within these organisations, and, as such, I had not assumed that this Islamic practice might be a potential problematic factor with this specific sample. However, in making this assumption, it is here that I revealed myself as an ‘outsider’ both in terms of the organisational dynamics and further in terms of a Muslim identity.

Having predominantly worked within secular environments, I had very little awareness of the inner echo systems⁸⁵ of faith-based organisations (specifically those within a Muslim organisation) outside of religious environments such as mosques. Consequently, despite locating these organisations within the narrative of ‘faith’ I had not presumed that the ‘faith’ lens would operate as the framework for a localised gender dynamic which might be in operation within these organisations. However, on reflection, I wonder whether my blind spot may have also been the result of doing research at ‘home’? For example, if I had been exploring faith-based organisations in a Muslim-majority country/context perhaps this would have been a greater consideration. In other words, I had not assumed that a parallel gender dynamic or structure might be in operation within these organisations, which would be ‘different’ to or from the norms of the dominant cultural gender dynamics and structures of the UK.

⁸⁵ The day to day and the gender, cultural and religious dynamics of the inner workings of the organisation, such as men and women not sitting at the same tables in the dining areas.

What this suggests is that I had framed my research participants within the cultural norms of living and working in the UK and therefore assumed that gender dynamics would mimic those of the dominant society within the workplace. I had not considered that within these organisations, specifically those where male and female staff worked together, there would operate a parallel or different gender dynamic, one that was based on a particular expression of gender dynamics. That is to say, I had not considered the same gender dynamics that operate, for example, within mosque spaces, where gender segregation or expression of gender non-mixing might operate within these echo systems. Furthermore, having negotiated access through individual gatekeepers within each organisation, neither I nor they had raised whether male participants had expressed any issues with being alone with a female researcher, and I had not considered this beyond the issue of presenting myself as conforming to a general standard of female Muslim modesty in terms of bodily dress and general deportment. While the Islamic concept of female modesty is viewed as corresponding to clothing for some, the broader meaning of the concept encompasses both male and female Muslim forms of behaviour and action. Thus, dressing modestly carries within it a deeper sense of an embodied action – it is about deportment and ethics, which not only discourages sexual attraction in others but also extends to all aspects of the self and encounters with others, in all aspects of life.

In applying the concept of modesty to my attire, in the first instance as a prop for the interview process, I had intended to gain acceptance as an insider to build rapport. However, a deeper layer of analysis would indicate that I was also

applying this concept at a secondary level – as an embodied faith-based practice – in the context of the interview process. By practising modesty, I was using the Islamic concept as a guide for my interactions with my research participants within the context of the interview. While at the start of the process, I had not differentiated between the gendered and the faith experience of the application of the concept modesty as having greater significance than simply determining ‘dress’, its importance became more apparent during the cross-gender interviewing encounters. In questioning my self-presentation as a ‘Muslim’, the embodied approach to modesty was taken in the fieldwork, in both dress and performance. It therefore revealed that my decision to adopt an interview uniform had been based on an ‘insider’ identity construction of the self and others (Stewart 2010), wherein the embodied experiences of being part of multiple communities in which identities are fluid and dynamic influenced this approach. A deeper analysis of this however reveals the panoptical arrangements of how disciplinary techniques influence and shift between power relations and gender dynamics.

Qualitative interviewing: negotiating ‘modesty’ in cross-gender Muslim on Muslim social research.

There were many subtle acts within the context of the interview encounter in which ‘modesty’ became a negotiated enactment of the intersection of gender and faith interactions between the interviewer and interviewee in this study. What follows are two examples and the associated reflection from the fieldwork experience.

Embodied relationships

Example 1:

Interviews were predominantly conducted on-site within three of the four organisations. The fourth organisation did not have a physical premise and the participants within this organisation were situated in several different geographical locations. I had to travel to them and use various sites, such as hotel lobbies, cafes, and universities. All the interviews involving male research participants, however, were conducted within their working environments. This choice of venue was not a deliberate action to ensure my 'safety' or avoid 'inappropriate' or 'misunderstandings' of intention between male research participants and myself, as experienced by both Arendell (1997)⁸⁶ and Lee (1997). Rather, the choice of venue, the organisational office, was in all cases suitable for the whole sample (both male and female) research participants. As the sample were elite professionals who were giving their time during office hours, going to their 'space' ensured that the interviewee would be more likely to keep the interview appointment and, also, allowed me to visit the organisation and gain some ethnographic details.

⁸⁶ In Arendell's (1997) paper, her male research participants constructed her as a 'potential date' thereby constructing her as both a sexualized and gendered being. Meanwhile, Barbara Pini (2005), draws attention to how encounters between a female researcher and male researcher participants highlight the enacting of heteronormative and hegemonic masculinities in shaping the interview process, particularly when the male research participants are older and 'elite' interviewees, who perceive themselves as experts and as having superior knowledge.

Interviews were one-to-one and held in a 'quiet space', such as a meeting room, away from other colleagues. In the two organisations where the participants included both female and male interviewees, the general office space was open plan. Meeting rooms were situated within 'public' spaces and, in the organisations where both genders shared the working space, these meeting rooms had large surround windows. The panoptical spatial arrangements highlight how the physical spaces are a micro-level of wider gender dynamics and arrangements. This ensured that while conversations would not be overheard – behaviour inside could be observed from the outside. In other words, these rooms provide both a public and private 'space' within which men and women could form working encounters but maintain religious ethics around modesty and the intermingling of both sexes.

While, for me, these environments and the 'space' entered into was new – as an 'outsider' I was entering into their arena - however, for the male research participants, this 'space' would be familiar, although the encounter within the context of the 'space' within which we would enter into would be unfamiliar to them. Thus, while at first glance it would seem that the male (and female) researcher participants held power over the spatial environment because of their 'ownership' and 'control' over it, as we were both entering into an unfamiliar intersubjective shared space, the power dynamics in this encounter - as it turned out - was often open to subtle and dynamic shifts.

This often started with negotiating seating arrangements, particularly with male research participants. The pattern which emerged would consist of either one of two approaches: First I would deliberately wait until the male research

participant had decided on where they would sit and then I would position myself opposite or off angle (depending on the shape of the table round or square etc) from them, to ensure that the Dictaphone could be placed between us. The second approach involved a little dance where they would let me take up my 'space' and then they would decide where they wished to position themselves relative to me and we would then both adjust or readjust ourselves, and my tape recorder, accordingly. This approach was partly to gauge how 'comfortable' or 'uncomfortable' each of us would be in the context of the space we had both entered into. My male research participants would never sit close to me, and I also ensured that there was a 'comfortable' distance between us, often this would be mutually gauged by small but subtle physical adjustments. On the whole, there would always be a physical distance between both parties and in most cases a desk length. This was observed by all male participants irrespective of age. Besides the physical distancing other forms of embodied distancing occurred specifically with my male research participants, such as limiting eye contact and or both parties avoiding and policing gestures such as smiling too frequently or using other facial expressions that might seem overly 'friendly'.

While some researchers have discussed the use of flattery and flirting as strategies for gaining data collection in terms of cross-gender interviewing, (and are therefore holding a heterosexual assumption) in my case I found that there was a deliberate and diligent effort made by both parties to ensure that such behaviour did not cross over into the interview encounter. While formal methods training would not recommend flirting and flattery as a suitable interview

strategy, eye contact and mirroring are viewed as acceptable strategies to develop a rapport with interviewees (albeit with female participants). These small gestures offer clues to non-verbal ways of communicating with research participants. These silent conversations offer a subtext to facilitating the interview encounter and are often left within the context of the interview and out of the formal analysis and discussions. However, they provide and draw attention to the importance of the interview as a shared embodied relationship. This reflexive, embodied empathy (Finlay 2005 , Finlay 2006 :1) is like a dance, wherein the researcher and research participant are part of an 'embodied intersubjective space' where each moves in and out of experiencing and reflecting while simultaneously moving through the encounter.

Example 2

Another example is related to the nature of the embodied relationship of the interview process. I often found myself more conscious of my body language and that of the male participants during the interview process. For example, I was more aware of how I presented myself and held my body. This embodied experience made me quite tense at times and I would find myself sitting upright and or adjusting myself more often than I did with my female research participants. In other words, I was less at 'ease' and more conscious of my gender, body, and the use of body language when interviewing male research participants compared to when interviewing female research participants. The advantage of this was that I was able to notice more of the subtle changes in male-research participants' body language to particular topics in the interview than perhaps I did with female participants. So, for example, I was able to note

when male participants felt more comfortable in terms of questions relating to their knowledge of faith, but less so when asking about 'gender' related questions. I was able to read when male participants were more engaged or interested in a line of questioning or even mildly impressed by my ability to draw out knowledge from them, and I even had several compliments on the quality of the questioning.

This reflexive embodied empathy during the interview encounter enabled me to steer the interview more productively with male participants particularly if they became too uncomfortable with gender topics. Often, I found that their discomfort altered the energy and flow of the interview encounter. This imbalance was something I felt also, which allowed me to drop in and out of topics while maintaining or renegotiating rapport. On the other hand, with some of the female participants, the embodied empathy often related to mirroring their excitement, enthusiasm, or energy when discussing gender questions or other feminine lived experiences.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

Moving towards analysis

As stated above the data collection had been completed by April 2018 however data analysis did not occur until September 2021. The gap between data collection and data analysis was due to an extended leave of absence for personal reasons. The original data collection consisted of four organisations. On returning from the leave of absence, I moved into the write-up period and, due to time constraints, the decision was made to focus on three organisations

on the basis that the fourth organisation was an outlier ⁸⁷organisation.

Therefore, the first move towards analysis began with an audit of the data collection, namely the primary data collection from the remaining three organisations the interviews. This included Islamic Relief and the two feminist-informed organisations, one of whom explored queer Muslim identities.

All the interviews had previously been transcribed at the time of the data collection; therefore, the familiarisation process concerned the transcripts and not the recordings. This initial familiarisation process would be better described as an orientation process to enable a re-familiarisation with the dataset based on the three organisations. This initial phase reestablished my identity as a researcher after a considerable gap between the research and the academic process. The goal, at this stage, was about re-entering into and embodying the role of a researcher rather than analysis of the dataset. It was during this initial reading and reorientation process that I identified that I would need to reorientate myself into theoretical traditions of feminism, new literature within the field of Islam and gender, and establish an understanding of the Islamic intellectual tradition including Islamic hermeneutics, Islamic philosophy, and Islamic history.

Having undertaken this reorientation process through the various theoretical and new literature within the field, as identified in the above paragraph, I then returned to the dataset. This became the first phase of analysis and essentially

⁸⁷ The organisation was the only one of the four who were not engaged in a formal process of undertaking gender and gender justice praxis. But they had been included as they had been engaged in the area of support domestic violence refugees and young male offenders centres and provided a divergent example through which to explore the project.

began as a reading and familiarisation process of immersion in the data (Braun and Clarke 2013). This immersion phase enabled me to become familiar with the dataset content thereby beginning to notice what may be more relevant to the research questions. It also enabled the process of identifying loose overall impressions of the data within the individual organisations and the entire dataset (Braun and Clarke 2013). During this phase, I kept a record of these 'noticings' in a journal (Braun and Clarke 2013). The value of these noticings reflects what it is that the researcher brings to the data and, according to Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2013:205), this can enrich the analysis whilst ensuring that the researcher remains wary of 'using them as the main or sole basis for developing' the analysis, on the basis that this is not a 'systematic engagement of the data'.

First analytical steps

Having undertaken the reading and familiarisation process of the dataset, I then chose to use a thematic approach for the systematic engagement of the data. A thematic analysis method helped identify patterns of meaning across the datasets in relation to the research questions, thereby enabling the generation of an analysis from the bottom up. In this way, analysis was not shaped by existing theory and enabled some flexibility in terms of the theoretical framework, research questions, and sample size, however, the weaknesses associated with the thematic analysis is that it is sometimes branded as lacking substance about other analytical methods (Braun and Clarke 2013:175-180). Meaning that I was unable to make use of software that may have allowed me to carry out a more rigorous coding strategy. However thematic analysis

enables for flexibility and reflexivity, providing a sophisticated and detailed analysis process and thereby drawing out juicer details from across the dataset. What is more, due to time constraints, the thematic method of analysis was best suited in the time allowed. The following key themes were identified through the thematic analysis process: feminism, gender justice, gender, and faith.

Second analytical steps

The second stage of analysis based on four clustered themes as linked in the following way: feminism and gender justice; feminism and gender; faith and gender justice; and faith and gender. These four combined themes were then applied across each organisation. The aim was to identify themes and patterns within each combined theme and set limitations on which elements of data would be used within each organisation to identify overlapping praxis and convergent or divergent trends. It was during this second layer of analysis, and through a deeper focus on these themes, that I identified the strength of feminist discourses, particularly around the concept of patriarchy. This had been more prominent within two out of three of the organisations and was explicitly absent within Islamic Relief, which ended up being my sole focus, as a narrative. The concept of patriarchy and more specifically the exact discourses and debates, as identified in chapters two and three of the genealogy, began to be repeated, as a significant pattern within F1. Whilst, in the other feminist-informed organisation F2, which worked with the intersectional feminist and queer Muslim identities there were more diverse narratives, in that there was an uneasiness with a unitary form of feminist storytelling. Even though both F1 and F2 organisations used the gender category of women as the main gender category

of attention the narratives suggested they were not the same. That is to say, while this second feminist-informed organisation F2 did not explicitly problematise feminism and feminist (both Western and Islamic) informed epistemological knowledge generation projects, due to their intersectionality with queer theorisation, they queried and reflected on the uniformity of feminist storytelling, as not fitting neatly within their discourse on gender justice.

Meanwhile, within Islamic Relief the concept of patriarchy did not arise because feminism was not an underlying assumption within their context, nor did they use the language of feminism. What is more, another significant pattern that emerged was that of different formulations of violent hierarchies and binaries, which became highly prominent across IR and one of the feminist-informed organisations F1, however, less so concerning the feminist-informed organisation that also explored queer Muslim identities F2. That is to say, despite the two feminist-informed organisations drawing on and mobilising their agency and activism on gender justice from within a shared Islamic feminist knowledge, based on the contemporary constructions of gender justice taken from Islamic feminist epistemology, F2 did not share the attachment to violent hierarchies and binaries compared with F1 and IR,

This drew me to question whether queer intersectionality might be troubling and destabilising the formulation of binaries within F2 but remained stable within heteronormativity operating within F1 and IR. In other words, despite the presence of feminism within the two feminist-informed organisations and the absence of feminism within IR, there was greater overlap between IR and F1. In not working with queer intersectionality, the stabilisation of the normative

heterosexual/heteronormative gender binary in combination with the Muslim woman as the victim discourse resulted in the repeating of familiar, essentialising, and stable tropes around female victimhood. However, it was only when I stepped back from the data analysis to reflect on these new noticings, that I began to identify the difficulty in managing the tensions and the messiness within the dataset. That is to say, while there were convergences and divergences between the different organisations, trying to find a common and shared language or framework and tools for thinking threw up too many complications. Add to this the time constraints of the research programme. As such, a pragmatic decision had to be made based on the following three challenges: difficulties in working with the concept of i) faith, ii) gender justice, and iii) feminism. I will explore this next.

Painting white roses red⁸⁸

One of the first challenges was the difficulty of working with the concept of faith. As discussed during the interview process, the participants had not defined what faith meant to them and how they operationalised faith within their context. In the absence of a shared language, faith becomes an undefined and undefinable concept.

⁸⁸ In Alice in Wonderland, when Alice arrives at the entrance of the garden of the residence of the Queen of Hearts, she meets a set of playing cards that are painted a white rose tree, full of white roses, red. The cards explain that the rose tree was meant to be red but that they had mistakenly planted a white one. During the second analytical steps, I often felt that I was trying to paint white roses red and that perhaps I had mistakenly planted these trees.

For example, in the case of IR, the original research project, in which IR would be the single case study, the interview data collection had been to explore gender mainstreaming. The interview protocol had been developed on the basis of capturing the elite interviewees experiences of generating, mobilising, and operationalising religious knowledge to produce a gender justice policy. As this element of the data collection would inform the wider set of intended data collection on gender mainstreaming and the development of a gender justice policy, I had not sought to explicitly investigate the religious subjectivities of these faith actors' experiences as religious subjects.

Furthermore, knowing, that IR had not drawn on Islamic feminist discourses including contemporary debates on and the knowledge production of female hermeneutical re-readings of the Quran, the research design and more specifically the interview data collection did not explore the agency of these faith actors as religious subjects or as feminist activists. Rather, it located them as development actors within an Islamic FBO. This limitation imposed on this element of the primary data collection method was due in part to the theoretical thinking tools informing the project at the stage, development discourses on gender mainstreaming, which were secularly informed. As such, in the original formulation of the research project, the process of knowledge generation, mobilisation, and the operationalisation of the gender justice policy within the context of development discourses, on gender mainstreaming, alongside the organisation faith actors' experiences of infusing gender, gender justices, and religion, thereby anchored this project.

However, when the project was destabilised due to external dynamics like the loss of the helpful gatekeeper, and the project was reconfigured to a multiple case study approach, the exploration was now on how the different faith-based organisations (within the UK) attempted to infuse gender and gender justice discourses into their context and the relationship with the mobilisation of religious knowledge. The multiple case study approach would provide a richer source of data. However, a complication appeared because I had already started the interview process with IR, based on the interview protocol based on the single case study and the need to ensure rigour within the overall dataset resulted in having to find a way to extend the questions to fit the three new organisations with the IR dataset. Furthermore, the demands of the research process also required that I use this interview protocol with the other three organisations, who, unlike IR, had not undertaken a formal process of developing a faith-informed gender justice policy. However, as the semi-structured interview method enables for some degree of flexibility, it allowed for some degree of amenability to the different organisational experiences, while ensuring that the broad themes could be explored. It was only during the second stage of data analysis that this absence became visible. In doing so it complicated the analysis process and the concept of faith became another casualty in the process and complicated the progress of the project. In the end, I had to acknowledge the cul-de-sac I was in and, due to time constraints, the theme was dropped.

Another blind spot that emerged was that as a researcher undertaking Muslim-on-Muslim research, I had not considered during the research design and

development of the interview protocol that I would be conducting Muslim-on-Muslim research. This may seem like a significant oversight, however, while feminist methodology and research advice focused on subjectivities and objectivity dilemmas, the religious subject, is not considered. While advice is available on how to explore different cultures, races, and identities (Apentiik and Parpart 2006), the dearth of methodological literature on Muslim-on-Muslim research experience remains under-reached with the following few exceptions (Quraishi 2008, Abbas 2010, Ryan, Kofman et al. 2011, Zubair, Martin et al. 2012). Next, during the third round of analysis, and having not considered myself a religious subject, or as embodying a religious subjectivity explicitly, I did not explore this. Indeed, this element of my subjectivity was silent and I may have silenced that of the participants, too. In viewing this element of my own embodied experience as outside of the research process, I did not explore this within the experiences of the participants, thereby leaving out a potentially rich source of data.

A second challenge was the difficulty of working with the concept of gender justice, particularly as all three of the organisations were approaching gender justice through different strands. For example, IR and F1 were exploring gender justice based on the Muslim woman as the victim. However, the feminist-informed organisation who were exploring the intersection of queer Muslim identities F2 explored gender justice based on the Muslim woman in terms of female leadership as a religious authority, and through ritual prayer in terms of female prayer leadership.

A third challenge was the difficulty of working with the concept of feminism, particularly whilst the two feminist-informed organisations operationalised their discourse of gender justice using feminist praxis, both Western and Islamic feminism, and used the language of feminism to mobilise and generate religious knowledge through Islamic feminist epistemology. IR on the other hand, did not use the language of feminism or feminist praxis to mobilise and generate religious knowledge based on Western and/or Islamic feminist-informed epistemology. However, IR was informed by development praxis and therefore used the language of development and the language of religion to operationalise their discourse of gender justice, whilst the other two organisations were not informed by development praxis. That is to say, a feminist researcher's task is to bring in feminism, and while this can enrich the data analysis, it can also impact the data analysis process, and result in epistemic violence (Spivak 1988). In that, a feminist lens may be informed through powerful and dominant discourses, like patriarchy or gender equality. As discussed in chapter four, the insightful work of Claire Hemmings (2011) which drew attention to how feminist knowledge production and storytelling, about ways of knowing and seeing a subject can become part of the intellectual cultural baggage that informs the data analysis process. The result is that it may then be read into the data. From my reflective practice, I can see that when feminist-informed analysis does not reflect on the usefulness of patriarchy as more than just an explainer for gender power relations, then the untroubling of this feminist storytelling will simply repeat itself.

As a result of these challenges, I then returned to the theoretical and conceptual tools to identify better ways in which to think through the puzzle presented in front of me. In reflecting on the analytical process and the themes, I began to question my positionality as a feminist researcher and whether my standpoint may have influenced the underlying assumptions that were underwriting how I was approaching the analysis process and whether I was failing to read the silences in the text but also whether I was reading and applying explanations from outside of the text. In doing so I was able to identify how, as a feminist researcher, I found myself reading patriarchy into the analysis without problematising whether the patriarchy was silent or absent within the context of the text and the context of the organisations.

Third analytical steps

The third and final steps in the analysis then placed me, full circle, where I had started. As a single case study with Islamic Relief, but rather than focusing on the gender mainstreaming journey, the process of the analysis revealed through the previous analytical steps that in the untroubling of gender and in using the language of and mechanisms of orientalism, IR's faith actors' experiences of mobilising religious knowledge during the 'turn to religion' discourse within development would provide the mechanism through which to understand an ascending analysis of how knowledge/power and resistance playout and how discourses and debates resurface, are reconciled, and (re)orientalise through the generation and operationalisation of religious knowledge for gender and gender justice. In the following chapters, I will present this analysis. Starting in chapter six, I begin with exploring how Muslim faith actors operationalised

religious knowledge to construct the category of 'gender' within the context of IR. Here I will draw on the work of Judith Butler (1990) to trouble gender. Next, in chapter seven, I will present an analysis of the Gender Justice Policy to understand the kinds of knowledge and the faith actors' experiences of operationalising religious knowledge for gender justice a discussion on gender justice explores the knowledge/power and resistance and here, in particular, I will draw on the thinking tools from chapter four. Finally, chapter eight provides a conclusion to the project.

CONCLUSION

Having begun with telling the tale of how I fell down the rabbit hole, I then outlined the interview process and, using an ascending analysis approach, I examined the micro-level of interview dynamics to examine the power relations and gender dynamics that were enacted throughout the data collection period and how this impacted research design, methods, and the analysis process. I drew on Foucauldian interpretations of the body and lived experiences to explore power relations, identity, and the body of the individual researcher. I highlighted how social science research techniques of domination, in pursuit of knowledge on the object of study, are enacted through the researcher who, in the pursuit to be the ideal researcher (objective, neutral, rigorous, and ethical), may use disciplinary techniques through self-surveillance, before, during, and after the interview encounter and how these techniques may continue to (re)produce the 'docile' bodies of researchers. In chapter seven, I extend this idea to examine whether these techniques are representative of knowledge production within development discourses through an ascending analysis of the

Gender Justice Policy to exemplify in what ways these mechanisms repeat within the faith actors' experiences of mobilising and operationalising religious knowledge for gender justice.

In taking a reflexive approach to fieldwork in development practice at home, I had a heightened sense of self-awareness within the fieldwork practice, which I explored through an ascending analysis of power to reveal how the researchers' interview uniform can reveal power relations and gender dynamics that are enacted through and on the body. In taking a form of self-reflexivity, which was present during the interview encounter (Arendell 1997), I recognised the embodied engagement of the research practice which weaved in and out and throughout the fieldwork, analytical processes, and into the written texts produced (Narayan 1993). What is more, I recognise that the embodied situatedness of the fieldwork experience and practice may impact the data collection process, as those whom I was researching might be categorising me, the researcher, by my bodily movements, posture, and actions, as much as by sex/gender, race, class, age, and sexuality, and religious subjectivity in as much as I, the researcher, am the subject and that these categories are socio-culturally constructed (Oakley 2007, Sultana 2007, Broom, Hand et al 2009; Lislak 2015). And how intellectual cultural baggage can result in Muslim orientalism (Hammer 2012, Grewal 2014) and a re-orientalism (Lau and Mendes 2011). I also provided a sense of the difficult research journey underpinning the study which led to multiple iterations of the project and the impact on the process and outcomes of the research project.

In the next chapter, I examine how IR construct the concept of gender. In chapter six, I explore the ways in which intellectual traditions between feminism, Islam and development surface and resurface and whether they (temporarily) can be reconciled in this case study.

6. THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS AND WHAT THE ‘NATIVE ANTHROPOLOGIST’ FOUND THERE: GENDER.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on faith actor-oriented approaches to the ‘turn to religion’ within international development, specifically examining how the concept of gender is constructed. I investigate the intersections of feminism, Islam, and development, exploring how these intellectual traditions emerge, interact, and are reconciled in this case study. Specifically, the chapter highlights the experiences of a group of faith actors in development at IR as they navigated the formal implementation of gender within the organisational structure and developed a Gender Justice Policy during the turn-to-religion era.

The chapter begins with a discussion of how religious and Western feminist constructions of gender have produced a dominant discourse that establishes binary ways of thinking (Steinfeld, Hutton et al. 2024) about gender/sex categories. I draw attention to how these binaries have become entrenched, revealing the limitations and challenges they present to academics and practitioners. This sets the stage for understanding the broader context in which gender is constructed and perceived within IR.

Building on the genealogy chapters, I examine how Muslim and Islamic feminist scholarship has historically focused on the ‘woman question’ within a gender-binary framework. These genealogies demonstrated how globalisation had perpetuated colonial projects of enforcing a global gender hierarchy based on

domination along gender/sex, race, and religion (Steinfeld, Hutton et al. 2024). In tracing this history, I suggested that Muslim and Islamic feminists had uncovered various hidden conflicts, revealing the complexity of the terrain, and how constructions of gender and gender justice carry the vestiges of coloniality. Repeating categories of gender/sex and racial hierarchies resurfaced, further complicating the discourse. These debates and discourses, particularly concerning the 'woman question,' resurfaced in the analysis of how gender is approached within this case and development during the turn to religion era.

In this section, I engage with Judith Butler's (1990) concept of 'troubling gender' to challenge binary constructions. I explore how faith actors at IR questioned the stability of Western feminist representations of gender and the default category of 'women', resisting dominant theoretical constructions. This exploration reveals how colonial legacies resulted in IR decoupling from feminism by separating Western feminist constructions of gender from sex. This shift inadvertently perpetuated colonial gender binaries by flipping the focus from gender to sex, allowing religious constructions to normalise and naturalise dominant gender binary configurations.

Next, I analyse how faith actors mobilised religious and development intellectual traditions to construct gender within the turn-to-religion context at IR. I illustrate the various ways these actors engaged with different interpretations of gender through religion, development, and the interplay between gender and development. These sections demonstrate how faith actors moved toward different readings of gender, seeking to reconcile religious beliefs with

development goals. Whilst resisting dominant Western feminist discourses on gender.

In the final section, I extend Edward Said's (1978) concept of Orientalism by investigating the question of gender through the lens of Orientalism, particularly focusing on Muslim faith actors at IR and their role in gender and development. I highlight the contradictions and convergences involved in translating gender and development into FBOs during the turn-to-religion era and examine the re-orientalising implications on both the 'othering' of FBOs themselves and their 'othering' of the (Muslim) communities they support in international contexts. I argue that the faith literacy project introduced by international development donors served as a form of knowledge production on 'the other', reinforcing existing power dynamics and epistemologies. This project acted as a condition for engaging FBOs, in shaping how gender, development, and religion were constructed and understood in this era.

Furthermore, in extending Said's (1978) concept of the new Orientalist. I apply the term to the Muslim faith actors in development at IR and explore how they may constitute the new Orientalists in international development. Moreover, I argue that the experiences of the new Orientalists in development show they internalised Orientalist discourse and how these mechanisms of Orientalism discourses map onto international development, influencing the narratives and practices of both development agencies and FBOs during the turn to religion era.

By examining these dynamics, this chapter aims to shed light on how the construction of gender within IR is influenced by faith actor-oriented approaches, revealing the complexities and nuances of navigating gender in the turn-to-religion era. This analysis underscores the ongoing impact of Orientalist discourse on gender debates and highlights how these debates, particularly around the 'woman question,' resurface in contemporary discussions about gender, religion, and development.

HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF GENDER AND THE CONTEMPORARY CALLS TO TROUBLE GENDER

In the beginning, first came man, and then came woman. This normative 'gender' narrative within the monotheistic traditions is part of how 'religious worlds' are made (Bielo 2015:82). The suggestion is that gender in relation to religion refers to: 'sex-associated characteristics and behaviours in both the natural and the supernatural world' (Duderija, Alak et al. 2020:7). Within the monotheistic religious traditions, including Islam, the normalisation of the discourse of gender is constructed on a heteronormative gender binary model, in which this model is 'naturalised' (Butler 1990). As discussed within the genealogical explorations in chapters two and three, there are many debates, discourses, and contestations within the gender-Islam nexus. Thus, within Islam 'God' created the 'believing man' and created the 'believing woman'. The question as to whether God created gender or/and whether gender has been read into religion is then at the heart of the debates and discourses on gender and Islam. Overall, these debates suggest that the social construction of gender

has historically been read into religion and equally religion has shaped gender (Duderija, Alak et al. 2020:7).

Meanwhile, within the 'Western feminist worlds', in the beginning, first came sex, and then came gender (West and Zimmerman 1987). Inside the 'Western feminist world' sex is often viewed as biological, and *gender* is often viewed as socially and culturally constructed. However, Judith Butler (1990) has troubled this distinction between the categories of 'sex' and 'gender'. Butler (1990:2) in drawing out the tensions within Western feminist theory highlights the normative construction of a gender binary model as heteronormative/heterosexual and the default category of 'women', as the main 'subject' of feminism.

Thus, Butler (1990:7) questions whether the default 'women' as the 'subject' of Western feminist theory may form exclusionary practices that undercut feminist goals and subsequent claims to 'representation'. In other words, Butler (1990:7) questions the stability of the constructions of the category of 'women' and 'gender'. To put it another way, Butler questions both the construction of these categories as essentialist representations of the female and more importantly asks whom these categories exclude, and include and, who decides as to who is included or excluded. Butler (1990), in troubling gender, invites us to question the stability of and the representation of these categories and to:

'seek to understand the discursive production...that certain cultural configurations of gender...consolidate and argument their hegemony...'
(Butler 1990:45).

That is to say, Butler (1990:46) is inviting us to deconstruct gender. What is more, she asks us to cause 'gender trouble' by:

'subverting and displacing those naturalised and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power' (Butler 1990:46).

Like Butler, I, too, was troubled by the domination of the gender binary within the narratives of the dataset. I am happy to take up Butler's invitation to trouble gender.

CONTEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER: TOWARDS A NON-FEMINIST READING OF GENDER

Faith actors' experiences in troubling gender within the context of IR and the 'turn to religion' in International Development

Within the context of IR, the concept of gender was a contested term. This required careful management by the faith actors formally introducing this concept into the organisational and operationalisation processes at IR's Headquarters in the UK. That is to say, the engagement with gender was part of a systematic and official organisational commitment to this thematic area of work, which up until that moment, had been on an ad hoc basis often within field offices in areas such as in Bangladesh. This formal process of engagement was not only a strategic shift in operations, at a programmatic level within the field and thereby also drawing the spotlight of attention on the organisation marking a shift in, and, at an institutional level a) in terms of organisational culture, and b) its positionality within the field of development.

That is to say, gender would seep into the capillaries of the organisation and permeate throughout. An organisational change at this level would draw in new actors and players into a conversation who, until may have been gender blind. In that gender may not have been on the agenda and as such it had not been troubling, but now it would be. This new site would be a field of contestation in which various faith actors, including those at the policy level, would be involved within different forms of power relations, negotiations, tensions, sites of resistance, and sites of normalisation. In the following quote, the faith actor identifies some of the strategies that they had to employ when attempting to introduce a contested term into a new context:

‘Okay, the terminologies was one of the challenges we had to be sensitive, what language do we use. We had to sensitise people and educate what’s gender, it’s relevance to our work, how it links to poverty and suffering...the word gender because it is of course a word, a very packed word, it has different meanings for people with different genders, being female or male, the social construction of this, but for some gender might be, relate to other gender identities, whether we, we don’t address this issue at all, we define it as male or female. So yes, the title was a challenge, whether we can use gender justice as the title because was there, so this awareness raising and step by step, helping especially our leadership management to understand that this is not a bad word, this is the right word...step by step they allow that to be accepted...’ (I 25:4-5)

In the above quote, the negotiations and tensions that would have shaped these conversations show how different points of power and resistance operated

within the same site and shaped the construction of meanings on gender within this context.

Thus, the need to sell gender as having a business relevance is heard in the opening negotiation alongside a desensitisation process from the contested historical legacy around the concept of gender. The implication here is that the term gender is an empty signifier (Laclau 1994) which is loaded with meanings; as is suggested, by the need to 'unpack the word'. While the interlocutor does not directly address feminism or sexuality there is a hint of both in the phrase 'what language do we use'. It might equally be reframed as: what language do we not use? In this case, the answer might be, we do not use the language of feminism. In acknowledging 'other gender identities' there is then a suggestion of non-binary gender identities and sexualities, but this othering is made clear by the comment 'we do not address them' that is to say, these categories are excluded and silenced, thereby normalising the gender binary model as the dominant gender model within this context.

Untroubling Gender: The Normalisation of the Gender Binary Model

The normative gender binary model configuration (of male-female heteronormativity) is made the legitimate site of the subject of gender within the context of the organisation. Thus, despite the interlocutor's awareness of how the concept of gender remains an unfinished category (i.e. non-binary constructions of gender expressions) and that gender identities are socially constructed. The interlocutor is clear that within the context of IR the dominant model they have chosen to work with will be the gender binary configuration

that assumes the normalisation of the heteronormativity of the gender configuration of male (sex) and female (sex) categories.

That is to say, it was based on biological and oppositional categories of differences between the sexes. The organisation deliberately decided to untrouble and be untroubled by the gender binary model. The interlocutor's definition confirms the specificity of the formula they choose to normalise and would, therefore, operationalise within their context. Wherein, the female sex and male sex categories comply with the religious worldview of sex-associated characteristics and behaviours (Duderija, Alak et al. 2020). The assumption here may be based on the naturalisation and normalisation of sexual difference, which is based on a 'different but complementary' framework of sexual difference (Chris 1999:16). In chapter seven, this framework is visible within the GJP and will be discussed further there, and so I will not cause too much trouble here.

In deliberately choosing to work only with the gender binary model, and excluding the non-gender binary model, I suggest that the faith actors may have understood the two models in a literal sense at a material level of embodiment, rather than consider them as frameworks through which to experiment or explore new possibilities. That is to say, the faith actors in working-in and working-out gender did not trouble gender. In other words, they were not troubling gender based on gender as a social, cultural, and historical construction of gender (identities).

This micro-level of analysis (at a singular and organisational level) articulates how in organising around the normative binary model of gender, the use of this configuration of gender, might be viewed as part of the disciplinary techniques of the normalisation and naturalisation of heteronormality (Butler 1990).

In organising around the gender binary model of the heteronormative/sexual framework within the strategic process of operationalising gender at IR. The implication is that gender when it enters into new contexts particular gender configurations travel better than others. Gender experts who operate within these contexts may use gender constructions that include or exclude categories as essentialist representations of gender.

This case shows that the heteronormative binary model travelled better than the non-binary model within the context of IR. The normative configuration of the gender binary model is perhaps classed as a more stable model and categories of male and female (within this model) can operate within fixed mechanisms that can be easily operationalised.

However, fixed meanings led to the closure of other possibilities. This may lead to (gender) business as usual. In which, the gender hierarchical model continues to form the power relations and the normalisation and even naturalisation of the heterosexual dynamics of gender relations within which problems are set and solutions are framed. This gender framework fails to recognise that power can operate in diffuse ways.

Thus, in untroubling gender, IR maintains the heterosexual dynamic of gender relations. The consequence of the untroubling of gender is that it might have

implications in terms of thematic work streams, on, for example, gender-based violence and issues like domestic violence. Where the problem of gender-based violence will be limited, and to the normalisation of heterosexual dynamics of gender relations.

Untroubling Gender: The normalisation of the heterosexual dynamic of gender relations

In untroubling gender, the normalisation of the heterosexual dynamic of gender relations maintains and opens the door to the normativity of a gender hierarchical model, which, alongside the gender binary model further legitimises certain types of power relations. This would for example include the patriarchal family structure, in which, at the micro-level, power might be exercised in the home based on hegemonic masculinity within Muslim households based on fixed gender roles (Siraj 2010). Subsequently, these power dynamics might be further naturalised based on religion, for example by prioritising hierarchical gender relations within marriage within the Quran. (Bauer 2009, Mir-Hosseini 2009, Siraj 2010, Chaudhry 2013, Bauer 2015, Mir-Hosseini, Al-Sharmani et al. 2015, Mir-Hosseini, Al-Sharmani et al. 2022), over non-hierarchical or other verses around human interaction (Wadud 1999, Mir-Hosseini, Al-Sharmani et al. 2022, Mubarak 2022).

CONTEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER: TOWARDS A MUSLIM/ ISLAMIC READING OF GENDER

This then presents a problem for faith actors in development who operate between policy development at the 'centre' and practice in the field at the 'periphery'⁸⁹, as the following quote highlights:

'...I think it was more a fear that what gender means and, and the word 'gender' itself within Muslim community, in some Muslim communities you just need to mention it and you get you know, immediate apposite, oh you know, it's like somehow that talking gender issues is somehow at the root of trying to dismantle the Muslim community, you know, so like our religion is all based on somehow one understanding of what men and women are, and relate to each other...this is one of the problems is that the, this traditional discourse on gender is very rooted in a particular vision around role and to some extent, that would appear to be supported by some texts.' (I 26:8)

For the above interlocutor, the insider-outsider role as a faith-actor in development draws out the challenge of how gender does not always travel well into new contexts and how emotive and contested even the 'word gender itself' is within Muslim communities. What is also suggested is that gender is infused

⁸⁹ I have deliberately used these terms as they highlight another binary that operates within the context of development, in which faith actors in development are insiders-outsiders and the complexities of over there and over here. Furthermore, as I intend to discuss in chapter seven, faith actors in development operate within both technical roles and as reflective practitioners (Schon 1983).

with a troubled and troubling legacy within the context of Muslim communities (over there).

The traces of orientalism (Said 1978), colonial feminism (Ahmed 1992), and more recently, the repeating of these mechanisms, within the War on Terror (Hunt 2010) continue to hint at the discourse that brown Muslim women are victims of brown Muslim male patriarchy (Bouachrine 2014), although none of this is said directly.

Thus, in untroubling gender and maintaining the normative gender binary model, matters are made more complicated for the interlocutor, as from an insider-outsider religious subject positionality 'our religion' situates them in an inside-outsider dynamic that makes it difficult to challenge fixed notions of gender roles that are based on hierarchical gender models of heterosexual dynamics of gender relations, especially when it 'appear[s] to be supported by some texts'.

In the second quote (I 26), below, the interlocutor takes us on a journey through the various insider-outsider dimensions that these faith actors within development, and who are also religious subjects, find themselves oscillating between. Similar to the above quote, the second quote from the same interlocutor (I 26), below, shifts between various subjectivities. What is unveiled are the complexities of the politics of location (Madhok 2020). It reveals the emergence of, I suggest, the new Orientalist (Said 1978). That is to say, in taking Said's (1978:2) typology (as discussed in chapter four) the new Orientalist is 'an academic one' – within an institution, a specialist or generalist

who researches the Orient, who proposes a 'theses' about the Occident and the Orient, and whose mode of thought regarding the 'mind', customs, and destiny of the people of the Orient is based on the otherness between West and East.

The Politics of Location

The politics of location is a reminder in how global power relations can shape the production of knowledge and, thereby privilege particular sites of knowledge production and its dissemination (Madhok 2020:395). The new Orientalist is then caught up within the mechanisms of the 'systematic discipline' by which European culture can manage, produce, and claim an authoritative position (Said 1978:3).

The new Orientalists are entwined in the power relations that shape theoretical, representational, and (imperial/colonial) epistemologies through the transnational circuits in which knowledge moves through locations and 'assumes authority' (Madhok 2020:395). I argue, that when the politics of location is augmented with Said's (1978:3) argument that the mechanisms of Orientalism have shaped the Orient, this case attempts to show how the Orient is still not a 'free subject of thought or action'. Indeed, when the object of the 'Orient is in question', a whole web of interests is always tangled up within this (Said 1978:3).

What I argue here is that the politics of location is not only geographically, historically, and temporally located, rather, it is also, now located within the new Orientalists.

The New Orientalists (within International Development)

That is to say, the new Orientalists (and I include myself in this) are trained into 'docile bodies' (Foucault 2016) within development discourses. The internalisation of the mechanism of hierarchical binaries and the Orientalist mechanisms of othering is part of the self-disciplinary techniques through which 'knowledge production is (re)produced', in which degrees of otherness play out.

In the context of those who are located in the Occidental geographical locations of sites of knowledge production, the privileging of this location results in the new Orientalist engaging in a form of re-Orientalism (Lau 2009). Equally, the 'Oriental' in the location of the Orient is engaged in the politics of locations of sites of knowledge production and is shaped through the whole web of interests. In other words, power/knowledge and resistance are not shaped unilaterally or homogeneously within a specific politics of location. Rather, what I am suggesting is that the locations of politics are shaped and reshaped, made, and unmade, produced and reproduced, within a whole web of interests and are discursive operations between the present and the past, between points of power and points of resistance, and are over here and over there. As the following quote suggests (which I have separated into various points):

'So, like the role of women as manager of the home basically, you stay at home, pray at home, don't go out, you know you are encouraged to do that and there is some religious traditions in Islam, really promote the...tradition. If you view their literature, you will find a lot of these saying of the Prophet Mohammed about, many of which are actually very weak and, and so some of the sort of, this kind of discourse had

persisted in Muslim community for hundreds of years and, and was very present within the UK Muslims community...'

In the first part of the interlocutor's quote the suggestion is that within the UK context, there are multiple strands of conversations on what is Islam and how this might be expressed. The battleground is based on producing knowledge and who has religious authority to speak and be heard. What is also apparent is that these discourses centre on 'the woman question' (Crosby 2012).

What is also visible is that the discussion centres on women's bodies and feminised roles and on polemical debates around agency and resistance. The hijab debates, the public and private roles of women, and the use of religious knowledge to construct specific notions of the 'Muslimwoman' (Cooke 2007) are all discourses that appear in this quote. The 'Muslimwoman' then becomes a category upon which arguments are constructed, such as the 'ideal Muslim woman' or 'ideal Muslim woman believer' (Duderija 2011). These conceptualisations of an 'ideal' have implications for and on the lives of women who identify as Muslim. The category of the 'Muslimwoman', slips neatly into the gender binary model. In doing so, intra-theological debates within 'normative Islam' (Duderija 2016:1) offer heteronormative readings and the focus is then 'women' thus, resulting in narratives that remain constructed along 'violent hierarchies' (Beasley 1999).

'I think...and a lot of women now are adopting niqabs and you know, very, very conservative....whereas some of the other, and there are some movements in the UK are even questioning whether hijab is an

absolute obligation for a Muslim women and looking at jurisprudence, looking actually dismantling and critically analysing jurisprudence...'

That is to say, the gender binary model and other binary oppositional categories turn up, resulting in tensions messiness and complexities. These complexities are then explored in the second part of the quote. Here the interlocuter, having questioned the authority of those who devise knowledge on the Muslim woman from 'weak hadiths' attributed to the Prophet Muhammed and who operate within 'traditional' discourses is then juxtaposed against those who engage in more 'critical thinking'. And this is where the faith actors locate themselves, as critical thinkers, as 'faith literate'. That is to say, the implication here is that the faith actors within development are not 'carriers of the tradition' of the Islam of the East as Archive (Grewal 2014, Basarudin 2016). Rather, they are engaging in reflexive practice (Grewal 2014, Basarudin 2016, Shaikh and Seedat 2022) in which the language of religion and the language of development is beginning to infuse.

'there are some traditions that are very uncritical and will, will see any critical thought as a, as a real sort of threat and, and even develop a discourse against critical thought and there are some which are, that try to be much more faith literate and understand, try and understand the underlying jurisprudence and that's the area that we fall into you know, we, we then therefore, address some of these issues from that perspective of how, how religion informs and how the text informs, and so really dismantling them and going back. So the issues of GBV, FGM, early marriage and all those sorts of things, is trying to understand them

from the perspective of, of benefit and...what the original purposes were, what was the original rulings and indeed, what the purpose of the religious teaching is...if it's not being beneficial...addressing that and getting rulings to say you know, that that's not perhaps an essential' (I26:8-9).

CONTEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER: TOWARDS A DEVELOPMENT READING OF GENDER AND RELIGION

The introduction to the faith-literacy project and the mobilisation of religious knowledge generation and production is then based on 'dismantling and critically analysing' the foundation texts within Islam and jurisprudence. These strategies are similar to Islamic feminist and Muslim women's hermeneutical projects, which the interlocutor hinted towards. While Islamic feminist and Muslim women's hermeneutical projects draw on the discourse of patriarchy, as the site of power. Within IR, and as the above interlocutor's quote shows, patriarchy isn't troubled or considered as an explanatory argument for the 'teachings', although, it could be read in (and as I discussed in the methodology chapter, I did initially). The focus on thematic gender issues like GBV⁹⁰, FGM/C⁹¹ and early marriage, in terms of the focus of the faith-literacy project, as articulated by the interlocutor, is reflected in the policy. It suggests that the organisation had decided to concentrate on women as victims of practices in which brown Muslim women are victims of brown Muslim male patriarchy

⁹⁰ GBV – Gender Based Violence

⁹¹ FGM/C – Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

(Bouachrine 2014). Thereby evoking orientalist discourses and ‘victim feminism’ (Wolf 2013). Even if they did not frame it in those terms.

Untroubling Gender - Patriarchy and feminism undercover

On the one hand, the decision to be untroubled by patriarchy might be viewed as avoiding the feminist straight-jacket of patriarchy as the only site of power relations when it comes to gender issues. Thereby suggesting a form of resistance to the language of feminism as the voice of the subaltern. On the other hand, the implication is that the discourse of patriarchy might in itself be troubling within the context of IR, as it invites the suggestion of feminism as the language within which they are discursively operating (which I will explore in the following chapter).

A second implication within the context of IR is that maintaining a troubled discourse like patriarchy obscures an important difference between Muslim development organisations and feminist organisations who are exploring gender/gender justice within the context of the discursive tradition of Islam. In Muslim development organisations and faith actors within policy development and field practice include men and women who are engaged in gender/gender justice discussions and negotiations, often with/in different points of resistance and power relations.

In the context of IR, the utility of the discourse of patriarchy would have little to no strategic value. Subsequently, the framing of arguments within the discourses of patriarchy might tactically support the maintenance of the normative position of heterosexual dynamics of gender relations as constructed on a hierarchical gender model within Islam, (which by contrast, in feminist

discourses has strategic value). However, in IR, by untroubling patriarchy as the one point of power, the construction of gender can remain uncomplicated. Put simply, a fixed meaning of gender is easier to operationalise. To speak with authority, gain authority, and be viewed as authentically working-in and working-out gender from a stable conceptualisation (of gender) is easier. In that, at IR the construction of gender spotlights the various complexities of gender issues, it may be easier to disentangle and work within a hierarchical gender model than to trouble it.

That is to say, although fixed meanings of gender can operate to further normalise and naturalise heteronormativity and the closure of other possibilities. Fixed normative meanings of gender may tactically enable faith actors to undertake (policy/practice) manoeuvres that foreclose other points of power and points of resistance to gender justice praxis. It also becomes an entry point to enter into contested sites. However, the perceived stability of the gender binary model may thereby leave issues around domestic violence, for example, within heteronormative and heterosexual dynamics of gender relations untroubled. In that, a fixed meaning of gender continues to be a site of struggle even in the wider context of IR's operationalisations of gender. As the following exchange between the interlocutor and myself exemplifies:

Interviewee: 'Women are no longer in that understanding that we can be hit and silenced, we will continue to fight for the very right that God has given us.'

Interviewer: '....how do you deal with misogyny and patriarchy, but also, how do you deal with the different religious perspectives?

Interviewee: 'I mean the good thing is, I don't have to deal with everything, so there's another ambassador a group of ambassadors that we send just for those kinds of arguments, and those are male ambassadors who agree with us and there's quite a few of them that we, people have, who are part of the same kind of conversations. So you know, you don't throw yourself into the lion's den, you just say, we do like to go into the lion's den...if it seems that people's opinions can be swayed, then let's sway those opinions with people that they are more likely to converse with...misogyny is ripe in all, all settings...it's not something that we are going to change overnight...So yes, change is slow but change is happening and the things is, you don't want to go and parachute in and say, here I am, your gender, your gender superman gender superwoman gender persons that's going to save you from all these kinds of things, but no, actually you have to do it with tact and you have to do it with great diplomacy' (I 47:20-21)

What stands out in the above quote is that despite holding strong feminist values, this interlocutor has to operate a form of feminism undercover (Pacholok 2016). In which they have to operate within the gender dynamics of working within the context of power relations which are based on gender hierarchical structures, and thereby act as points of exclusion.

Equally, that there are males who are 'part of the conversations' questions the gender hierarchical structures of power relations and gender dynamics, that 'male ambassadors' and male allyship in the conversations offer a destabilising narrative to notions of Muslim male patriarchy as the problem to institutional and social change on gender justice. Rather, in this case, it is not business as usual, in which feminist insiders are marooned within the development institutions (Mukhopadhyay 2004). However, there is still the sense of silencing in that the subaltern is not able to be heard (Spivak 1988) and must still be spoken for by 'a group of ambassadors that we send just for those kinds of arguments'.

Taken together the quotes, presented so far, highlight some of the micro and macro dimensions of the discursive gymnastics that faith actors were required to undertake in their negotiations with working with contested terms when they first enter into new contexts. In the first quote, the deliberate choice to use the normative gender binary model of female and male, despite the recognition that gender was an unfinished category, then excludes and silences new possibilities or even in retrieving of different textual readings of gender models from within the discursive tradition. In the second quote, the reference to textual support for hierarchical and heteronormative gender configurations and gender relations would seem to support this. In other words, Islamic feminist and Muslim female hermeneutical religious knowledge production identify with egalitarian gender binary models from within their reading of the religious texts and exclude the normativity of the hierarchical gender relations model. IR, seem to assume a naturalisation and normalisation of both the gender binary model and the hierarchical gender model from within the discursive tradition of Islam.

I am not suggesting that the faith actors within IR were exerting a form of disciplinary power over any particular subject or enforcing these gender models into the context of IR as the following quote acknowledges: ‘...we know there is no one understanding of Islamic perspective on a complex issue like gender...’ (I 21:3). Rather, through the use of the normative gender binary model and hierarchical gender relations model these faith actors were reflecting the micro dynamics within the organisation and the macro dynamics within the wider contexts within which they operate/d. As the following quote highlights:

‘...the organisation felt that we weren’t really reflecting our faith values in our work particularly, that we were, we had become over the years quite secular really, we didn’t have a deep faith discourse about development and gender and about almost anything...humanitarian sector is extremely secular...we weren’t really being able to communicate very well with our beneficiaries around these issues, so we and gender was one of those areas which we weren’t really literate in. So, we tended to work with very traditional Muslim communities who have very gendered roles, and you know, very sort of cultural understandings...’ (I26:3)

‘So, when you are talking about gender, people automatically assume feminist, bra burning, hijaby women, are they going to burn the hijabs or are they going to burn an item of clothing, but that’s what I am saying, it doesn’t come from that construct. It comes from a deep sense of belief that actually, we are doing this because our Lord has made it incumbent on us to go though, to understand what social justice means and what that construct looks like. So, if within our organisations when we

implement the programmatic work...we have to leave no one behind...Most likely, Muslim women are left behind...Muslim women are always likely to be left behind' (I 47:7)

Here I will focus on the second interlocutor (I 47), who draws attention first to the intellectual cultural baggage of feminism's hegemony over the construction of gender through the language of feminism. The rather colourful imagery of a parallel Muslim and non-Muslim political engagement through the feminist activistic trope of burning symbols of female repression and resistance is offered as an essentialist idea of gender identities of difference. And yet, the idea of solidarity within feminism as a political project against patriarchal power structures is a form of feminist storytelling about the 'global value' of the fight for gender equality (Hemmings 2011:11). Having identified feminism as the location of gender trouble, within the context of the organisation, the interlocutor then introduces the concept of social justice and manoeuvres it away from feminist discourses.

The interlocutor then locates social justice, but not gender justice, into the language of religion. This identifies the category of Muslim women, specifically women within the location of IR's 'programmatic work', as the subject of exclusion from social justice. Moreover, Muslim women over there are not the subject of inclusion within social justice and the unspoken implication is that these Muslim women are the subject of social injustice. The construction of the victim Muslim women over there when set against the earlier portrait of the Muslim women with agency and who burn 'items of clothing' as acts of resistance, may then set up a Muslim difference (Patel 2022).

Furthermore, it suggests the seeds of re-orientalism are being planted, more so if this is viewed within the unspoken assumption within the final section of the quote, in that there is a connection between the language of religion and the language of development, through the use of Othering.

The development phrase 'leave no one behind' is incorporated as part of the religious subject's material and spiritual relationship with their identity as a 'believer'. The language of religion and the language of development become reinforcing systems of power relations that are further reinforced through the need to become more faith-literate. What I mean here is that the faith-literacy project might be perceived as mimicking the orientalist mechanisms of producing scholarship on the Other to know them and thereby justify ruling over the Other through the construction of the Self as different. I am not suggesting that the faith actors deliberately attempt to construct a narrative in which they rule over or disparage the cultural other, but rather that faith actors have internalised this normalising disciplinary mechanism.

CONTEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER: TOWARDS AN ORIENTALIST READING OF GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

To produce the GJP, the development of faith actors strategies, tactics, and manoeuvres offer insights into how the concept of gender was worked-in and worked-out (Ahmed 2015) by the faith actors within the context of the organisation's (re)turn to religion and within the context of the development discourse of the 'turn to religion' (Tomalin 2020).

'...so let's reclaim our rights as Muslim women, so therefore, it's not a western constructive agenda as we say, because actually that God given

right was given to us 1,400 years ago. You know when we saw female infanticide, girls were being worried for reasons beyond we, women were not even in the Western contrast, women were not being fairly equal and equitably treated, but Islam gave us that right, I feel 1.400 years ago and we have come to the space were we are now...' (1 47:15)

'If we look what the prophet did, he never hit a woman, he never do harm anyone and he so many times advocated for women's rights and criticised men who hit the woman. So, by this example, we managed to navigate through different schools of thought what people think and we recall, we go to the basic principles of the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet.' (I 25:13)

In the above discussion on the patriarchal discourse, I suggested that the 'male ambassadors' and male allyship within the UK-based Muslim development organisations might present new ways in which to destabilise the stability of fixed notions of the gender binary model and dynamics of gender relations when working in gender, in those contexts. In the above two quotes the exemplar of the Prophet as a male ambassador for narratives around 'gender' rights, issues, and conduct, is a power discourse. It relocates the construction of gender outside of the language of feminism and into the language of religion, which is also echoed through most of the quotes. It is then no longer a 'Western constructive agenda'. The assumption here is that it is an authentic narrative: the organisation is drawing on an implicitly Islamic narrative from the authority of the Prophet.

Returning to the past to fix the present

Returning to the past to seek out an authentic discourse is a strategy similar to Islamic feminist and Muslim female hermeneutical projects. That is not to suggest that there is mimicry at play. Rather, this methodological strategy of returning to the past to remake the present is a manoeuvre employed within the production of knowledge creation and one that is practised not only within the discursive tradition of Islam but even by post-colonial feminists like Spivak (1988), and by Foucault uncovering of buried knowledge (1975).

Within the Islamic tradition, all Muslims are reminded to follow the Sunna of the Prophet. That is, the Sunna is based on a religious imaginary that the Prophet Muhammed had been an exemplary figure, whose conduct and manners offer a 'translation' of Islam, and that all Muslims are to emulate his behaviour (Patel 2022:17). This encouragement to imitate the Sunna and the appropriation of key figures from Islam's historical past offers the faith actors the space within which to (re)construct or retrieve gender through the language of the discursive tradition of Islam.

As the anthropologist Talal Asad (2009), who was also influenced by Foucault, explains:

'An Islamic discursive tradition is simply a tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions of the Islamic past and future, regarding a particular Islamic practice in the present. Clearly, not everything Muslims say and do belongs to an Islamic discursive tradition. Nor is an Islamic tradition in this sense necessarily imitative of what was done in the past. For even where traditional practices appear to the

anthropologist to be imitative of what has gone before, it will be the practitioners' conceptions of what is apt performance, and of how the past is related to present practices, that will be crucial for tradition, not the apparent repetition of an old form.' (Asad 2009:20-21)

The Prophet as a male ally

In using the Prophet as the exemplar, these readings offer a possible destabilisation of gender as being constructed in opposition to men. In that gender is read through the subject of a man (in the genealogy chapters, the Prophet as a feminist ally is a theme that travels into different contemporary contexts, as in this case). In the genealogy chapters, I traced how the advocacy and the feminist storytelling about the Prophet and his behaviour towards women's agency identifies the Prophet as a 'feminist' ally for Islamic feminists and the faith actors within development, he is viewed as a 'male ambassador' on gender rights from within the tradition.

This reading of Prophetic allyship could be classed as a form of resistance to secular and Western feminist narratives on gender (as in, the Western feminist hegemony of gender equality or as an import from the West on the Other). Significantly, this (feminist) storytelling of gender differently (and one located from within an Islamic discourse) advances the potential of a 'Muslim difference' (Petal 2022) to constructions of gender.

It may also be read as a possible corrective by challenging heterosexist power and masculine hegemonic hierarchical dynamics of gender relations within the Islamic tradition. Thereby suggesting that brown Muslim men are not so dangerous (and Muslim women are not in peril).

The language of religion might provide a counterargument to (the Muslim Other who may view the Western Other as a threat to their culture and gender dynamics) and thereby enable the faith actors with a way to 'navigate through' contested concepts like gender (over there). Equally, it may offer a counterargument and challenge normative assumptions over here (with the European Other) within secular frameworks (in development) where the Muslim difference is viewed as incompatible with (secular/feminist) gender (equality) narratives.

This break in the 'impasse' enables an opening through which the faith actors in development can engage with contested concepts (like gender) and topics such as gender-based violence, domestic violence, and FGM/C. It enables them to set the tone by suggesting that within Islam there is a 'precedent' for addressing gender issues from within an Islamic discourse. This enables them to argue that they are not importing or a form of Western feminism. Thereby challenging the problematic and troubled histories of 'colonial feminism' (Ahmed 1992) within contexts over there.

This may provide a way to temporarily reconcile debates between feminism and Islam thereby highlighting how these debates surface and resurface within contemporary and different contexts, including in this case. In trying to reconcile the troubled history of colonial feminism and work through contested concepts like gender, the shifting of scripts may offer a way to work out and work in the language of feminism and the language of religion. However, as I will argue in chapter seven, the language of development, moreover, the language of gender (mainstreaming) and development come together in ways that appropriate

‘gender’ to reframe colonial feminism. Whereby the faith actors, in this case, became the new Orientalists. Who, through the mechanism of the faith literacy project, came to employ Orientalist strategies, resulting in re-Orientalism.

In the next section, I intend to demonstrate how re-orientalism presented itself through gender (and in chapter seven I will extend this further to include gender and gender justice focusing more on the faith literacy project).

The New Orientalist, Re-Orientalism, Gender, and Culture

In chapter four, I discussed the concept of Re-orientalism (Lau 2009). In Re-orientalism the: ‘...positionality of the powerful [to speak on behalf of the ‘other’] is simultaneously that of the insider and outsider, where the representing power can be simultaneously self and other’ (Lau 2009:572). Having already introduced the new Orientalist, I intend to demonstrate how the re-orientalism narrative presented itself in this case.

IR regards itself as an organisation that works in the ‘field’ as a doing organisation, in the real world. Yet, they chose thematic work streams on gender which focused on ‘the women question’. On the one hand, gender is conflated with women, on the other, women as the default of gender, is as Butler (1990) has argued is not unusual within feminist praxis. In this case, the faith actors focus on feminised issues in key areas such as GBV, FGM/C, and early marriage is in keeping with dominant development discourses. In the following quote, the faith actors pride on being a ‘doing organisation’ is heard clearly:

‘...we are a doing organisation, and it’s really hands-on. You see us more when you go to the field and the work that happens...rather than sit back and start some of the theorising and some of the conceptual work...the best thing is to get down to the ground and see what is happening.’ (I 21:2)

In the earlier part of this chapter, I identified how contrary to the interlocutor’s comments of ‘start some theorising’, the organisation, as part of the turn to religion discourse within development, were involved in the knowledge production of a faith-literacy project and the GJP was the product of that. Consequently, the workstreams that emerged are then part of that theorising and conceptual work. That is not to say that there was an absence of an iterative process between the theory and praxis. Indeed, there was and similar to many development organisations, monitoring and evaluation play a significant role in this process.

Here I will present a few examples from the experiences of the faith actors between field and theory. show how these faith actors within development not only deployed the Orientalist discourse of ‘culture’ as the cause of ‘harmful practices’ but also how this discourse then reinforced a form of Muslim Orientalism (Hammer 2012, Grewal 2014) and a Muslim difference (Patel 2022).

CONTEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER: TOWARDS A TURN TO RELIGION AND RE-ORIENTALIST READING OF GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

The operationalisations and mobilisation of religious knowledge generation as part of the wider 'turn to religion' (Tomalin 2020) discourse within development resulted in the mechanism of orientalist knowledge production, in the service of producing knowledge on the other, operated as a source of normalising power.

Faith actors, within development, are then made to be part of this normalising process on the other. Development faith actors in this context, are required to operate under the process of the techniques of self-disciplinary power, in which utility and docility within the discourse of development serve to normalise the process of power/knowledge in reproducing the re-orientalism of otherness.

Within IR, the process of re-Orientalism, in which faith actors normalise otherness, is then played out in diffuse ways, through the operation of power/knowledge and resistance. The following quotes highlight this:

'I was in Mali, and we did a session on FGM/C, and during the conversation one of my colleagues was very vocal how can you come in and tell us about our culture and our religious practice, who has given you the right?' (I 27:6)

'...we are living in a British Muslim society and they don't agree with that, what is this thing, you are going on to come to talk to me about divorce, I already know about divorce, no, you need to know about, so you are always like, coming at it from a, I know better than you, because I am Muslim, I am Muslim feminist, yet we are not that faith literate. Women

don't want faith literacy...they just wanted to know; how do I stop my husband beating me.' (I 47:23)

Re-orientalism in these examples appears within a web of complexities. The interlocutor's position as living within the colonist's countries, within the context of the UK, and working within a Muslim development organisation does not make them immune to experiencing acts of resistance.

Within the business of development, religion is something that happens 'over there' (Elledge 2019). Yet, for those 'over there' they question the religion that is being done 'over here'. This might suggest that the Muslim difference (Patel 2022) might be happening in reverse.

While the faith actors in the context of the UK might be engaged in points of resistance with Western and feminist discourses on gender, Muslim faith actors, in majority Muslim contexts are also engaged in points of resistance with the new Orientalists.

The new Orientalists and the use of knowledge production in terms of the infusing of the language of religion and the language of development is then the next point I want to draw attention to. In the following quote, the 'culture' discourse is heard, the return to the past to an authentic genuine Islamic practice to women's rights, and the notion of Muslim and re-orientalism:

'...the way we navigate this, though this is, is from a perspective of rights, of rights from an Islamic perspective because there is a big difference from cultural norms...So, some Muslim communities sort of that that view that women, should take a very much supportive role in the

marriage...be more at home...more of a homemaker...well you know, that's not...borne out by all the literature...from the early days many Muslim women were leaders, active, from business women, all of this...So what does a Muslim woman have a right to do...that's what's helpful because then we are able to say to communities, well you know thank you for your opinion, you know you may be rights, but the reality is they do have a rights to do this...' (I26:9-10)

'So it's been a very like challenging time trying to make these connections and overcome some of those stereotypes and make these distinctions between culture and religion and that when you are making that distinction, you are not actually classifying that culture, that culture as wrong. It's something that has been continued through you know, hundreds of years, you cannot label or stigmatise that community for having this practice, but it's how you move forward from this step, point, how can you stop harming girls, harming babies, harming children...' (I27:8)

While it is clear that neither of the interlocutors is engaging in a deliberate form of 'epistemic violence' (Spivak 1988), the mechanism of othering is normalised in how they suggest that these communities and how the 'culture' is expressed, within this context, are static rather than evolving or dynamic in nature (Tomalin 2013:2).

Furthermore, it also sets up a juxtaposition between 'culture'/'traditional' and 'religious' practices. This narrative is suggestive of the colonial legacy of

viewing the other as traditional and, therefore, essentialises these communities and it orientalises the culture, too. As a Muslim development agency, based in the UK, that operates within the business of a secular/Western discourse of development, the faith actors' experiences of the turn to religious discourse suggest a degree of internalising in how orientalism is an unfinished framework. In other words, the pernicious 'modernisation' discourse inherent within the development agenda might be still at play.

The faith actors' experiences of the faith literacy project offer clues to how the re-orientalism mechanism presented itself in the process of the development of religious knowledge production. To differentiate between the aspects of the religious traditions that have shaped and or influenced cultural practices and attitudes, from those that are: 'beyond culture and reflect the 'true religion' (Tomalin 2013:2); the 'dismantling' of instrumental influences in shaping (patriarchal perspectives)/biases and harmful practices; are ways of troubling gender, without being troubled by feminism. In chapter seven I will expand on the theme of 'culture' and how it influenced the process of the faith-literacy project, the GJP, and gender justice praxis.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I attempted to show how the faith actors involved with the development of introducing gender and the development of the GJP, attempted to trouble gender but ultimately left gender untroubled. In that, the faith actors continued to use the normative gender binary model. In doing so, IR thereby naturalised this cultural configuration of gender as the hegemonic discourse within their discursive practices and (religious) knowledge generation. In

untroubling the gender binary model, IR then continued to focus on the gender category of the 'woman'. In other words, they maintained the discourse of 'the woman question' (Crosby 2012).

In working within the discourse of 'the woman question' IR, in combination with the mechanism of the gender binary model, re-produced the category of the Muslim woman as the 'victim'. In doing so they evoke Orientalist discursive representations of the otherness of the Muslim woman as voiceless lacking agency and needing to be rescued. Islamic feminist discourses offer patriarchy as the explanatory cause of women's victim status by situating their argument within religion and through the thesis of patriarchal bias within the Islamic intellectual tradition as both the cause and the corrective to women's gender in/justice within the discourse of Islam. Muslim (secular) feminist scholars have troubled this argument as it suggests that Muslim brown women need to be rescued from a brown Muslim male patriarchy (Bouachrine 2014). In the case of IR, the explanatory cause used is 'culture talk' (Grewal 2014). That is to say, they do not problematise patriarchy or the Islamic intellectual tradition. Rather, they forward the thesis that the cause is the 'culture' over there. In other words, they do not use the thesis of the patriarchal bias within the Islamic intellectual tradition as an explanatory cause or corrective. In untroubling patriarchy, IR is untroubled by feminism.

However, in turning to religion, IR then maintained and consolidated the assumption of the naturalisation of the gender binary model as being normatively and discursively produced from within Islam. Thereby silencing any possibilities of other models co-existing within the discursive tradition of Islam.

Indeed, despite the retrieval of buried knowledge from the past and the consultation with technical specialists (ulema scholars) trained within the Islam of the East as an Archive, IR's use of the binary model only offered a limited and fixed way of understanding gender and gender justice. In that, the gender binary model remained untroubled at IR, which may have been a strategic manoeuvre by faith actors, to tactically (and perhaps practically) enter into contested sites and debates on gender and gender justice. I argue that, when viewed through the Foucauldian lens of the normalisation of power and Butler's troubling of the gender binary, IR's resistance to Western feminist theory, suggests a troubling of the authority of Western feminist theory as the dominant discursive knowledge production for the construction of discourses on gender, and gender and development.

IR in seeking to mobilise and operationalise a discursive knowledge production taken from the discursive tradition of Islam (Asad 1996) might have been resisting the normalising power of the 'hegemony of gender equality' (Hemmings 2011:12). It is difficult to claim what extent the faith actors and/or IR, inadvertently, questioned the representativeness and stability of feminist hegemonic discursive knowledge production for the cultural construction of gender. In attempting to trouble the categories of women, of gender, and of gender justice and gender equality, IR's/faith actors attempts to destabilise the normalisation of (western) feminist knowledge production and the discursive production of the cultural construction of gender/gender justice, suggesting that IR's/faith actors resistance to the powerful feminist discourses may have

resulted in repeating orientalist discourses, despite their attempts to resist violent epistemic colonial and imperial discourses of orientalism.

To summarise, I argue that IR/faith actors attempted to (de)construct concepts like gender/gender justice away from (western) feminists' discursive constructions to find alternative ways to work differently with gender and gender justice within their context, by attempting to (re)construct concepts of gender/gender justice discursively from within the Islamic tradition.

IR's reconstruction process of gender/gender justice and their operationalisation of gender/gender justice through the Gender Justice Policy resulted in a form of Muslim Orientalism that was enacted by the faith actors as a form of re-Orientalism due to their location and position as faith actors within development. I suggest that: a) this re-Orientalism may be part of the historical legacy of the Orientalist discourse (which I attempted to show in the genealogy chapters and presented in the conceptual and theoretical tools chapter) that continues to shape discourses and debates on gender and Islam. And b) that the re-orientalism by faith actors within the development context may be partly a consequence of orientalism unfinished within development discourse, in which, the internalisation of the mechanisms of orientalism's othering and the internalisations of techniques of disciplinary power is enacted by development faith actors. To put it simply, the making and unmaking of otherness is part of the 'unseen power' which acts like an 'ever-acting force' (Crosby 2012:5) in which the existing order of society is the product of discursive operations of the effects of the knowledge production of the past.

7. THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS AND WHAT THE 'NATIVE ANTHROPOLOGIST' FOUND THERE: THE GENDER JUSTICE POLICY AND THE NEW ORIENTALIST

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I argued that the process of knowledge production within development has simply been transferred into new contexts wherein faith actors in development, similar to feminist policy actors, are the new Orientalists. In the case of faith actors within development organisations, not only are they the new Orientalists, but they are also, due to the politics of location and the insider-outsider positionality engaged in a form of re-Orientalism. Building on that chapter, this chapter uses the concept of the new Orientalist to explore how themes identified within the chapter on the analysis of gender have been imprinted onto the GJP.

To show how the relationship between the operationalisation of the religious knowledge produced by the faith actors as part of the faith-literacy project may constitute a form of re-Orientalism. In this chapter, I intend to discuss how the faith-literacy project might be explored as part of the mechanism of relations of power that continue to produce and reproduce and 'justify colonial hierarchies' (and binaries) through the deployment of intellectual 'imperial projects – past and new – [and how they] remain central to knowledge production' (Bhambra, Gebrial et al. 2018:5) on the other, within development discourses and

development scholarship.⁹²⁹³ Moreover, in this chapter, I present the argument that Gender (in development) during the turn to religion era might be a reframing of colonial feminism. FBOs were expected to show compliance with donor funding criteria as part of the new partnership arrangements with international/national donors whereby gender (in development) and gender mainstreaming acted as a form of enforced collaboration with dominant development discourse and the business of aid/development. This acted as a mechanism for dominant development discourses to resurface Orientalist strategies that played out in this case leading to the new Orientalists in development undertaking re-orientalism.

This chapter is organised into several key sections that collectively support the central arguments regarding the role of faith actors in reproducing colonial hierarchies and the reframing of gender in the development context during the turn to religion era. The analysis presented here is based on a comprehensive

⁹² I will draw on the GJP and my interviews with the faith actors to explore several of the themes that were presented by the faith actors and which I discussed in chapter six. One of the key themes that I drew out in the previous chapter was the cultural norms argument. In this chapter, I will attempt to show how this theme is presented in terms of gender justice. I also intend to explore how the faith actors mobilised and operationalised religious knowledge through the mechanism of the retrieval of buried knowledge. This was in the form of returning to the Islamic past, to construct new narratives around the Islamic past to ground the present gender justice discourse as being framed from within the tradition of Islam. That is to say, in the analysis of gender, the exemplar of the Prophet Mohammed, as a male ally, became an important narrative in which to construct and ground the authenticity of undertaking gender justice at IR. In using a form of feminist storytelling for example drawing out empowerment narratives about the women of the first Muslims (Afsaruddin 2013), IR deployed a strategy that draws parallels with Islamic feminist hermeneutical methodological approaches (Hidayatullah 2014, Duderija 2015), to construct and operationalise religious knowledge for gender justice within the discursive tradition of Islam (Asad 1996).

⁹³ One of the challenges I have faced with this chapter is that many of the above themes do not fall neatly within the complexities of other themes, like the untroubling of the gender binary model, the disappearing and reappearing Cheshire cat of feminism, and the mechanisms of power/knowledge and resistance. As such, this chapter may feel like a 'mad tea party'.

examination of the Gender Justice Policy, alongside interviews with faith actors at Islamic Relief, focusing on their reflections on the lived experiences of the period from the inception of partnerships with international and national donor agencies through to policy development and field experiences with beneficiaries. By incorporating insights from various stages of this journey, including the impact of the policy within the UK organisational context and its post-implementation outcomes, the chapter provides a multifaceted perspective on the GJP.

The first section, 'Framing the Gender Justice Policy within the Post 9/11 Context and the Muslim Question', situates the discussion within the broader geopolitical landscape that has shaped contemporary development discourses. Here, I explore how the post-9/11 environment and the ensuing focus on the 'Muslim question' have influenced the operationalisation of the gender justice policy, particularly for faith-based organisations (FBOs) working within the field of development and how development offers a new site in which to explore the Muslim question from a Muslim faith actors perspective.

The second section, 'The Reframing of Colonial Feminism during the Turn to Religion Era', examines how gender (in development) has been co-opted as a tool to enforce collaboration with dominant power structures. This section argues that FBOs, under pressure to comply with donor funding criteria, have become vehicles for the resurgence of Orientalist strategies, effectively reframing colonial feminism within the contemporary development paradigm.

The chapter then progresses to the third section, 'Shaping the Gender Justice Policy at Islamic Relief through the Faith Literacy Project', which delves into the specific case of Islamic Relief (IR). This section analyses how the faith-literacy project, as a component of the broader development agenda, has been instrumental in shaping the GJP. It argues that this project, while ostensibly aimed at promoting faith literacy, also serves as a mechanism for perpetuating power dynamics that echo colonial hierarchies through the lens of re-Orientalism.

In the fourth section, 'The Disappearing and Reappearing Cheshire Cat of Feminism', I explore how feminism, particularly within the development discourse, has been silenced and yet feminist goals have been strategically employed through gender mainstreaming. This section examines the use of strategic essentialism and how the language of religion and development has been infused to sustain existing power structures, whilst silencing feminism, thereby allowing Orientalist strategies to surface, resurface, and be temporarily reconciled in this case.

Finally, the chapter concludes with 'The Gender Justice Policy at IR: A Description', where I provide a detailed analysis of the GJP within Islamic Relief. This section focuses on key components within the policy, here I draw from interviews with faith actors to provide a richer analysis, and I highlight the different sites of power and resistance as experienced and articulated through their voices. The analysis captures the various facets of the GJP, offering insights into how the policy has impacted the organisation, particularly in the

UK, and the ways in which it has shaped the experiences of those working on the ground post-implementation.

Overall, this chapter seeks to unravel the complex interplay between gender, faith, and power within the realm of development, highlighting how dividing practices, resistance, agency, power/knowledge dynamics, and gender mainstreaming, framed the operationalisation of religious knowledge by faith actors in development and how this may constitute a form of re-Orientalism. By analysing the GJP through the lived experiences and reflections of Muslim faith actors in development, this chapter provides a nuanced understanding of how colonial hierarchies and binaries continue to be produced, reproduced, and justified within contemporary development practices in the turn to religion era and faith actors-orientated experiences to this period.

FRAMING THE GENDER JUSTICE POLICY WITHIN THE POST-9/11 CONTEXT⁹⁴ AND ‘THE MUSLIM QUESTION’

In the post-9/11 era, ‘the Muslim question’ in the West became a significant question within the United States and Europe (Norton 2013). In contemporary politics, the figure of the ‘Muslim’ became the site where political theology, political philosophy, ethics and politics met (Norton 2013). Islam was marked

⁹⁴ It is worth highlighting that: a) IR had made several attempts prior to the GJP to draw up a gender policy. However, these previous attempts had limped off the track well before they could even enter the race, whereas the GJP did cross the line; and b) the GJP must be understood within the broader development discourses of the period within which it was being formulated, the 2000s. More specifically, the discourses around ‘gender mainstreaming’; within the context of the development narrative of a ‘turn to religion’ (Tomalin 2020); and the gender-Islam nexus within communities of Muslims (in diaspora and majority Muslim contexts), in light of global geo-political shifts and the Global War On Terror. Another way to explore all this is to consider the: ‘Muslim Question’ (Topolski 2018).

out as a political and security threat and the Muslim question was bound up with questions on human rights, sexuality, women's dress, and ethics (Norton 2013). Anne Norton (2013) has suggested that the Muslim question should be understood as framed from the perspective of the conceptualisation of Western civilisation. For Norton (2013) the Muslim question is not about Islamic values or a 'clash of civilisations' argument between the West and Islam. Rather, Norton proposes it is the West's commitment to its ideals and values of enlightenment (fraternity, liberty, equality) and democracy that the Muslim question is really questioning. Norton (2013) offers a new vision of a democratic life that does not scapegoat Muslims but rather makes room for them. Norton's reading of the Muslim question offers a possible complication to Western anxieties around Islam and Muslims (particularly around those who live in the West).

Meanwhile, Anya Topolski (2018) draws attention to how Western civilisation's secular strategies are shaped within the spectre of Western religious discourses. In her examination of 'political theology'⁹⁵ Topolski (2018: 2180) in the context of the Muslim question in Europe suggested that political theology had influenced secularised strategies in which the 'othering' of religions and religious minorities in Europe had resulted in a 'particular practice of secular 'minority management'...[that had been]...born under the shadow of Catholic theology' (Topolski 2018:2194).

⁹⁵ 'Political theology analyses the secularized, previously Christian, theological concepts that structure contemporary politics (e.g. sovereignty) (Schmitt 2010). Its aim is to examine and expose how theological forms and models of power continue to operate, often inconspicuously, in politics today' (Topolski 2018:2180).

Importantly, Topolski (2018:2179) identified that the Muslim question, in the context of Europe, was framed within the basic binary of 'them' and 'us'. In this frame, the management of transnational Islam was based on the state apparatus and government deciding who was Muslim, who had successfully integrated, and what it meant to integrate (Topolski 2018:2179). This had been strategically managed by internally dividing groups into 'good' and 'bad' Muslims and Islam (Mamdani 2002). This top-down management of religious minorities has implications at national and transnational levels (Topolski 2018).

However, the construction of a good and bad Muslim and Islam is based on orientalist strategies of dividing practices and 'othering'. In which, one homogenous Muslim group are internally divided through the mechanism of othering and the figure of the deviant other Muslim is set against a normative (Muslim/Western) Us. The process of internally dividing Muslims from Muslims is conceptualised along an internal and external 'other' (Topolski 2018: 2190).

During the turn to religion period, the resurfacing of Orientalist strategies had implications for international development. In particular, its application to diasporic communities of Muslims in the West in the post-9/11 era and the new partnerships with Western-based Muslim FBOs.

In the context of development, the turn to religion era, in the post-9/11 period, invites the possibility of exploring the Muslim question within a new context, namely international development. Furthermore, the treatment of gender and gender justice by Western-based Muslim faith actors-orientated approaches to the turn-to-religion era offers a new site to examine gender and gender justice

through the lens of Orientalism and faith actors' lived experiences of producing a gender justice policy within this period provides new readings of gender and gender justice.

The Muslim Question in the Context of Development

In drawing on the above discussion and turning to International Development, at first glance, the differentiation of good Muslim/Islam and bad Muslim/Islam could be read as a challenge to the Orientalist discourse, which had conceptualised and represented Islam and the figure of the Muslim reductively as one homogenous group.

In representing Islam and the figure of the Muslim as differently constructed, this heterogeneous reading of Muslims and Islam might be considered as sounding the death knell on orientalist tropes that **all** Muslims be viewed as one homogenous group, characterised as backwards, strange, and as them against the normative us European (Said 1979, Topolski 2018). Thereby complicating the Orientalist discourse.

A potentially complicated Orientalist discourse, wherein the re-presenting of the figure of the Muslim as good/bad and Islam as good/bad (whilst still problematic, as it is based on the binary construction of internally dividing Muslims) did, however, offer an entry point for marginal development actors into mainstream development. Namely, Muslim faith-based organisations (and Muslim faith actors) in development were invited to form partnerships with development agencies at the centre. Indeed, during the turn to religion era, certain Western-based Muslim FBOs were accommodated by international and national donor agencies within the development sector, as in the case of IR.

However, Nora Khalaf-Elledge (2021:2) has called attention to how Western donor countries did not trouble their own complicated historical relationship with their own 'religion' during the 'turn to religion' period within development. That donor agencies failed to recognise, address, or examine how donor countries' particular religious politics may have influenced development efforts and narratives previously, may also account for why within the turn to religion period donor agencies continued not to do so when they moved forward with new partnerships with faith actors (Khalaf-Elledge 2021:2).

Consequently, donor agencies during the turn-to-religion era employed a strategy in which they offshored the business of religion to Western-based Muslim FBOs. Wherein Western-based Muslim FBOs undertook a process of becoming faith-literate on various development topics including gender (and Islam).

I will discuss the implication of the faith literacy project at IR to show how, shaped through the Muslim question, the faith literacy project (re)surfaced orientalist strategies of othering. In this way, I argue that Orientalism remained unfinished within international development. But before I turn to the faith literacy project at IR, I set out the argument that during the turn to religion era, the business of development used gender as a form of enforced collaboration with Western-based Muslim FBOs. In doing so, gender (in development), I argue can be considered as the reframing of colonial feminism. Whereby Muslim FBOs not only took on the role of being the native informant and the new Orientalist in the business of aid/development, but more perniciously, the enforced collaboration and compliance of the use of gender, by the business of

aid/development, resulted in the faith actors employing orientalist mechanisms and strategies through a process I call re-orientalism.

The Reframing of Colonial Feminism during the Turn to Religion era: the use of gender to enforce collaboration with power in the business of Development

As I will show in this chapter and through this case. In the context of development, the business of religion being offshored to Western-based Muslim aid organisations draws the gaze towards the continuation and operation of orientalist binary frameworks of ‘them’ and ‘us’ and a ‘top-down application of power’ (Topolski 2018:2179) during the turn to religion period.

In drawing on this model, the ‘them and us’ orientalist binary construction inconspicuously accommodated Western-based Muslim aid organisations into the business of aid/development. It also strategically managed the business of global aid by institutionalising these organisations and the religion of the other through what Topolski (2018:2193) claims to be the practice by the ‘ruling power’ to: ‘enforced collaboration with power in combination with reduced agency and depoliticization’ (Topolski 2018:2194).

In the following two quotes from a single interlocutor, the use of ‘gender’ as a mechanism by donor agencies to ‘enforced collaboration’ is played out through the example of IR’s experience of introducing gender and developing the GJP within the context of a new partnership within international development and with international and national donor agencies.

In the first quote, the interlocutor recalls the start of the process of IR’s journey (in formulating a GJP and the beginning of their partnership with development

donors), particularly their relationship with a UK donor agency, namely DFID. In the second quote, the emphasis is on how gender is a mechanism of enforced collaboration, and the loss of agency is heard towards the tail end of the statement.

The interlocutor traces the beginning of the relationship with the donor agencies. In the quote, the process by which the donor agency enforces collaboration is through a systematic process of compliance to and with development expectations from a top-down approach and the position of the 'ruling power'. I suggest that this process can be viewed as part of the disciplinary techniques of domination of development discourses and is therefore an example of the Foucauldian notion of utility and docility.

The use of gender by donor agencies to ensure enforced collaboration and compliance is measured through the organisational commitment to gender, an assessment process, and the possibility of maintaining or the loss of funding. Importantly, gender is enforced through the mechanism of a formalised gender policy. As the interlocutor explains, the process of developing the gender justice policy had been delayed due to the lacuna within gender and development epistemology and, therefore, required the need to do 'research' on the 'faith perspective on gender'. Moreover, 'what Islam says about gender'. Significantly, this new knowledge had to be 'watertight' and required 'new terminologies'. Although gender issues like FGM/C, early marriage, and domestic violence, are not new within the context of international development. The dominance of secular-based approaches (within international development) and IR's struggles to find a language through which to construct the GJP emphasises how the

orientalist binary of the 'them' and us' is inconspicuously present from the start of these partnerships.

This would suggest that within the context of the turn to religion era, there was a gap in terms of religion and religious knowledge within the business of international development, equally, Western-based Muslim FBOs faced a similar lacuna to the nexus of gender-development-Islam. Furthermore, feminist/gender and development discourses did not provide an adequate language or vocabulary or framework for new partners and partnerships with faith actors like IR.

For IR, who were entering into the centre of development and who were expected to incorporate gender, the reduction of their agency is heard clearly in these quotes.

'...we...had this annual assessment of these DFID programme and we scored a C, which under normal circumstances would mean that we lose our funding, but of course, I mean we had a kind of good relationship with DFID and explained the challenge...one of the delays was the gender justice policy...we had made this commitment and DFID expected us to do it...gender, whether we look at it from a faith or a non-faith perspective, is a quite a hot topic and no one can agree on anything...the gender justice policy was a very...difficult process. I mean especially when it can to dealing with things like early forced marriage, FGM/C, domestic violence...I mean we finally got there in, in the end...I mean no one can challenge us on it, we've done good research on the

faith perspective on gender, what Islam says about gender, about how women should be treated, their rights and kind of ...within that faith, so...it has to be watertight...things needed to be changed or terminology needed to be changes' (I 30: 5-7).

Another point worth emphasising is the focus on 'women's rights' further underlines how at IR gender is conflated with women. In this quote, the seeds of resistance to dominant 'gender and development' epistemology by IR are starting to come through in that 'terminology needed to be change[d]'. As discussed, in the previous chapter on gender, the resistance to (western) feminist discourses and particularly to terminologies such as the concept of gender was present from the beginning of the process. Later in this chapter, I will show how IR's continued resistance to dominant gender (and development) terminologies played out in the GJP, specifically to the concept of 'gender equality'.

Returning now, to the second quote, from the same interlocutor, what is visible is how international development uses techniques of domination to enforce collaboration. In the first quote but more pronounced in the second quote, the compliance and enforced collaboration with gender by donor agencies through a top-down application of power is heard more clearly. Furthermore, I argue that this quote underscores how donor agencies failed to explore whether the secular cookie-cutter approach to gender (within international development) might be incompatible with new partnerships and the religious frames of reference that FBOs would work within. The secular approaches to gender (within development) remained untroubled by donor agencies, who despite the

turn to religion, seemed to leave these approaches uncomplicated. Rather, new partners were expected to integrate into dominant development discourses on gender. This invites the suggestion that Western-based Muslim FBOs were expected to translate the development secular script into a sacred script (I will return to this point when I discuss the faith literacy project at IR, which will follow from this section). For now, I argue that the suggestion of translating secular to sacred scripts in development underscores the argument that the enforced collaboration of gender (and development) be viewed as a reframing of colonial feminism.

‘...it’s still very early and most policy implementation has a long lead-in period, I mean before you can actually see changes, but we are on the, on the right path and also...because of the existence of the policy we all, it is also easier to kind engage with, with kind of, with donors like DFID where they have a very, very strong stance and,...you know...that is a very kind of practical thing. Yeah, we are meeting donor compliance as well. So, so yeah, that I think where the change has happened or where the movement within the organisation is. I mean there is a lot of projects development work, particularly when it’s with large institutional donors like kind of DFID, DFID’s very strong on gender or ECHO or kins of CIDA, I mean the large institutional, it is kind of written into...the memorandum of understanding. I mean in some ways cases like we don’t have a choice, we have to deliver and so there’s a kind of an external push...because we need to comply with that and non-

compliance has serious consequences, so in some ways you can be kind of forced into it.’ (I 30:11-12)

SHAPING THE GENDER JUSTICE POLICY AT IR THROUGH THE FAITH LITERACY PROJECT DURING THE TURN TO RELIGION ERA IN THE BUSINESS OF DEVELOPMENT

The use of the term faith literacy is often associated with the language of development. It was a strategy that international/national donor agencies deployed when they decided to turn to religion as they did in the 2000s but then decided to offshore this process to faith actors within development, such as FBOs (Tomalin 2013, Tomalin 2020, Khalaf-Elledge 2021).

IR was one of those faith actors who were engaged in a partnership with DFID⁹⁶ as part of this turn-to-religion narrative. In offshoring the process of faith literacy to FBOs, on the one hand, it might suggest that donor agencies had turned to technical specialists within the field of delivering religious aid/development initiatives. Doing so would assist in consolidating this thematic concern.

Turning to specialists, such as faith actors within development, might indicate that the intersection between religion and religious faith and development, within international development, may have been part of a ‘post-secular rapprochement between faith and secular actors’ (Lonergan, Lewis et al. 2021).

⁹⁶ Department for International Development was in operation at the time of the data collection and IR were working in partnership with them. The Department for International Development closed in 2020. It has subsequently been replaced by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). For this project, I will continue to use the term DFID.

Post-secular, in this context, is understood as the ‘re-emergence of faith in the public sphere’ and rapprochement is understood as locating an ‘equal value on secular and faith-based worldviews’ (Lonergan, Lewis et al. 2021). More simply, this ‘two-way learning process’ may suggest a form of post-secular development of complementary knowledge production (Lonergan, Lewis et al. 2021).

A two-way learning process

That is to say, in a two-way learning process, different and separate discourses or scripts, for example, the ‘development script’ and ‘the sacred script’ (Tomalin 2020:22-23), when combined, may disrupt and even trouble common ways of thinking and writing. This in turn may disrupt the production of knowledge about the Other (Mbembe 2019). Subsequently, this might offer a way past the impasse of Orientalist and colonialist discourses, in which religion and development could be understood as part of the decolonisation of knowledge production as a joint venture and not as ‘epistemic violence’ (Spivak 1988).

These new ideas would let us meet the Other not as a thing to exclude and silence but as one with ‘whom to build a more just world’ (Mbembe and Corcoran 2019). In drawing in faith actors from within development, the suggestion might be that international development donors were exploring ways in which to decolonise and democratise development discourses. Drawing in not only alternative approaches (Bazán, Cuellar et al. 2008, Bebbington, Hickey et al. 2008), but also centring the knowledge from the majority margins (Watkins 2007, Shahrokh 2014, Causevic, Philip et al. 2020).

However, I trouble the assumption that faith-based worldviews and religion had re-emerged into the public sphere and that rapprochement could have equal value. The argument of the re-emergence of religion and faith-based worldviews evokes the suggestion that they went away. That religion had become located somewhere else or that this re-emergence has appeared outside of history (Deneulin and Bano 2009, Raja 2011).

The normative assumption is that secularisation is the centre of understanding and that rapprochement, therefore, is discursively produced through the secular worldview. That is to say, for there to be equal value the binary construction and the assumption that these worldviews are unequal needs questioning. Faith-based worldviews may have re-emerged into the public sphere for donor agencies. However, in the Global South, the experiences of those in the 'real world' (Pialek 2008:292), religion had never really disappeared.

If the turn to religion was a serious thematic concern within international development as a policy and practice, the process of offshoring faith literacy to UK FBOs invites the possibility of the instrumentalization of religion by the 'global aid business' (Tomalin 2020:1). It is business as usual and not a paradigm shift or post-secular development (Tomalin 2020).

The mechanisms of the development turn to religion may be similar to the experiences of feminist policy actors and advocates who were invited into development to advance gender and development. Here I draw on Rosalind Eyben (2010) who rather than exploring institutional capability focused instead

on actors and agency, and the tactics, manoeuvres, and strategies of feminist policy actors, to draw parallels with the experiences of faith actors.

In the case of IR, the faith actors involved with policy change (women and men) brought their insider activism to negotiate change in the 'battlefield of knowledge' between instrumental and transformative agendas (Eyben 2010:60). That is to say, similar to feminist policy actors who have to act pragmatically to secure instrumental changes when they infuse gender into 'existing ways of doing and organising things' (Eyben 2010:54), the experiences of faith actors in aid/development show similar outcomes. As suggested by the following exchange with the interlocutor:

Interviewer: 'Do you feel that the actual policy is faith-based?'

Interlocutor: 'So the policy...it kind of gives you an idea from a very kind of religious perspective what Islam says about a particular thing, whether it's about domestic violence...these policies need to kind of in some way inform the actual work we do. So I think that's where the gap is, that's where kind of the...faith aspect is missing. How if we put this policy into practice and we are saying this is a policy which is written from a faith angle or, we are using faith to guide us towards the achievement of gender justice and equal rights of women, it doesn't tell us how, how we can use faith to do that..' (I30: 8)

At first glance, the above quote would suggest that similar to gender mainstreaming strategies the faith-literacy project at IR might be read as a technical process. Whereby faith technocrats have undertaken the process of

mainstreaming faith and gender into IR operations. By infusing gender and infusing religion into existing ways of organising to meet the goal of having a gender justice policy, thereby meeting the development discourse idea of leading change (Khalaf-Elledge 2021:129) in the real world (Pialek 2008). This is further backed up by the following quote:

‘...I was a senior policy advisor leading a group of colleagues who were senior policy advisors...working on child protection, on gender, on conflict transformation...I was...working for a conceptual framework and an understanding on development from an Islamic perspective, as well as looking at climate change, and most of that work was primarily a) to get the organisation's head around what our faith understandings on those specific areas, but with a view to feeding in as much of that as we could into our programmes, into our advocacy and into our daily practice and the various work stream that the organisation had...and it was during that period that the Gender Justice Policy was developed.’ (I21:1)

As stated, the development of the GJP had been undertaken by change-maker agents⁹⁷/faith actors within the policy unit, who operated within the UK context.

⁹⁷ The origins of the concept of: ‘change agents’, stem from organisational studies. Khalaf-Elledge (2022:128) provides a useful discussion on the idea of change agents in current development practice and provides the following commonly used definition: ‘Anyone who has the skill and power to stimulate, facilitate, and coordinate the change effort.’ For Khalaf-Elledge, the idea of ‘change agents’ needs to be applied within the notion of development discourses which centre on the idea of leading change; in which, change agents are crucial. She argues that formerly, women had been viewed as change agents in development initiatives that focused on gender equality and convincing local beneficiaries of harmful practices. This is a significant point, as the concept of ‘harmful practices’ is part of the vocabulary used within IR, especially around gender-based violence and FGM/C (which I will discuss in the main body of the chapter). Khalaf-Elledge whose work explores the gender-religion nexus in development, draws attention to FBOs and religious leaders who are also considered to be change agents. A

The audience of the GJP had been an internal audience within the field of international development, who were over there and over here, and this included: staff, donors, and donor agencies.

That is to say, the goal was to develop an organisational position on gender justice within development. To undertake development praxis that reflected IR's faith values, the goal had to be specific to their context. It needed to reflect the organisational conceptual framework and understanding of development from their conceptualisation of an Islamic perspective.

This meant that the objective was specific: gender (in)justice (issues), gender, and gender justice were to be framed within a discursively produced gender and development conceptual framework of IR's understanding of the business of doing development through a discursively produced understanding of Islam within the global business of doing development and within the wider social and geopolitical contexts that had and were shaping Islamic discourses.

The task of the faith literacy project might be better understood as an instrumental rather than transformative approach to knowledge generation (Bazán, Cuellar et al. 2008:176), undertaken by faith actors (policy bureaucrats) within the development context of the informal university (Bazán, Cuellar et al. 2008:176) with a specified concrete goal and outcome (gender mainstreaming

final point that I want to draw from Khalaf-Elledge's (2022:129) discussion on change agents, which plays a part in this project is that, while change agents are often contained within the development discourse on how development brings change to other people, countries, and institutions and not on the internal change within organisations and the impact that change agents may have when they attempt to advance an understanding of the role of religion in gendered development approaches Khalaf-Elledge (2021:130). In the case of IR, the use of the twin terms of change-makers agents/faith actors because of the various insider/outsider and internal/external dynamics and roles that these actors occupy.

and the development of a GJP). It was applied knowledge, and they drew on authorised⁹⁸ (normative) Islamic interpreters and interpretations of the Islamic intellectual Tradition to support the process.

As the following interlocutor recollects, their personal and internal organisational experience of the process of developing the GJP identifies the context-specific and instrumental approaches that mirror gender mainstreaming strategies within development discourses, but one that is threaded with the language of religion:

‘...there was, some urgency from programmes as well but mainly from policy agenda there was urgency for Islamic Relief to take a, specific, a clear stand, a clear stand on, on gender justice issues in general especially for, with reference to GBV...Gender-based violence...we established the process, planned for the process, how to achieve the agenda, how to achieve the Gender Justice Policy...I tried to bring different stakeholders together...So I had internal and external consultations...I think two or three months from initiating work on it and then the Trustees saw it...I was very hectic, very exciting, very challenging, very strategic. I had to strategize who to speak to, how to speak to, I had to use different languages to different people, I had to just utilise the entry points, and bring them together. Always starting from the faith perspective, from setting the grounds for, for the policy to be

⁹⁸ The issue of the ‘authority-dilemma’ is an important debate within the context of Islamic discourses, for a helpful discussion in regard to domestic violence and the Islamic Tradition see Chaudhry, A. S. (2013). Domestic violence and the Islamic tradition, OUP Oxford.

inherently embedded into the Islamic faith values that Islamic faith is guided by, aspire to, inspired...' (I 25:2)

The GJP was then a means by which to share IR's position on gender justice issues on GBV with their staff both those who were over here and over there and who operated within the field of international development. In part, the call for a gender justice policy came from the 'field'. From the voices of those on the ground, who would have consisted of technocratic faith actors/change maker-agents⁹⁹, and who would, also, then be expected to mobilise and implement the organisation's programmes. To feed back into the programmes, advocacy, and workstreams within their country-specific contexts over there. The GJP might then constitute and be classified as a form of knowledge of gender justice. To normalise a discursively produced gender justice mechanism for social change at an external level. Along with the specific discourse of gender justice, field staff would learn how to deliver gender justice praxis from within IR's organisational and operational agendas.

Mode of objectification – ways of knowing the subject

In applying a Foucauldian lens (Foucault 1978, Foucault 2016), the GJP could be read as more than a positionality paper in that the construction of a discourse on gender justice within this context might be viewed as the mode of

⁹⁹ When I use the term 'change maker agents/faitb actors' I exchange the order between the dash to suggest that these categories be considered as fluid subjectivities for these individuals. In that, these identities shift as does the notion of insider/outsider. What is more, when I use these terms, I am refereeing to how these are both 'collective' roles and individual 'agents', therefore, the terms operate as pronouns and adjectives, in that they may be distinguished as differently occupied, it is a descriptor and describes the action undertaken collectively and individually.

subjectification through which the human being is made into subjects (Dreyfus and Rabinow 2014). It might be seen as a form of disciplinary technique through which to transmit and carry into new locations a particular way of knowing the subject, in which the subject is known through the knowledge production of the discourse of what is and what is not gender justice. In this way, the subject comes to know themselves through dividing practices in which the normative and the deviant are made and remade (Dreyfus and Rabinow 2014). As the following quote would suggest:

‘...the big problem we find in the Muslim world is that there is a big alienation between faith discourse and scholars, religious literature and discourse and secular discourse and part of that problem is historical and actual separation of learning...in many Muslim countries religion won’t be taught in the universities...so you will adopt a very kind of tunnel vision type of, of you know, a very kind of unchallenged and, and without, unchallenged approach without, what’s the words, a sort of critical thinking, so this has been very damaging to the Muslim worlds because it leads to a discourse within communities which is unchallenged, which is often very weak from a theological perspective and so what we need to do was have a much deeper faith understanding...if we were addressing gender justice, we don’t approach it by saying...surely women have a right to this...we’d approach it from an Islamic perspective...surely in Islam that’s not correct or...if you are approaching from the community perspective, they are speaking though that language of meaning that relates to their understanding of text and scripture and you have to come

with a language which incorporates all of that, but informs in a, in a constructive way where, where they may be going wrong...' (I 26:6)

In international development, subjectification through the discourse of leading development change to the Other, might assume that the Other is deviant – that the practices of people within these 'other' contexts need to be changed. In the above quote, the new Orientalist creates a them and us construction by the notion of two worlds, a Muslim World, is one that is both ossified and lacking in critical engagement. It is backward, inferior, and lacking theological sophistication. The implication in the quote is that these communities in the Muslim World (which is classed as a separate world) are deviant.

The deviance is based on a failure to work within a specific model of gender justice as conceptualised from the normative us rather than a recognition that within some contexts the gender justice framework might be perceived within a different construction of what gender justice is, for example within a gender hierarchical framework of justice.

Moreover, the deviance is in the incorrect theological understanding. The implication here is that the deviant other Muslim is constructed within the context of theology and, therefore, the other Muslim is deviant because they are inferior Muslims for lacking a deep faith. In this way, the implicit suggestion is that the new Orientalist in development is superior, who has a deeper faith, a critical theological understanding and who must lead them through change. The shades of a modernisation agenda are heard, but it is not a secular informed

modernisation, but rather a hermeneutical modernisation agenda in which the Orientalist discourse is repeated through the process of re-orientalism.

Thus, the leading through change discourse in which change is external and in the real world is assumed based on advancing new, perhaps even different, ways of understanding religion and gender rights in gendered contexts that might be configured in different ways from the one that the GJP is prescribing. However, IR's conceptual framework of development from an Islamic perspective, and their gender and development faith literacy informed GJP, may, inadvertently, and simultaneously be imposing (re)orientalist and Islamic gender hierarchical frameworks for gender justice.

Further in this chapter, I will show how the subjectification through the discourse of leading development change to the Other drew out the power relations within these contexts of the Muslim World. I will draw on various examples of the new Orientalist's real-world experiences in the field with the deviant Other Muslim. Where the process in which the mode of resistance was then based on how the human subject came to be known and know themselves through the practice of dividing as being different. In the evoking of this difference, I argue the notion of the Muslim difference becomes another practice of dividing wherein (re)Orientalism is repeated.

The new Orientalists (faith actors) are, through the mechanisms of the disciplinary techniques of normalising development discourses, transformed into the subject. The faith-actor comes to know themselves as the faith-actor within development, leading change to 'others'. In that sense, the argument that the

faith literacy project was a bureaucratic process undertaken by faith bureaucrats within the context of an institution to ensure policy change based on efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of existing structures of doing and ways of organising things in the business of development remains.

However, this did not mean that IR did not resist normative development discourses. As discussed in the gender chapter, IR resisted dominant Western (feminist) concepts around gender and this resistance continued within the GJP. As actors who had been operating from the margins of development, the partnerships with the centre of development, as I have shown, were not based on a two-way knowledge exchange. In many ways, IR was still operating from the margins of development. Similar to feminists (in development and Islamic/Muslim feminists) the margins are sites within which counter-hegemonic ideas are explored.

Operating from the margins of development

Within development discourses, there is the view that NGO/FBOs operate within the margins of development (Bebbington, Hickey et al. 2008:176). What is more, for NGOs to be politically meaningful, they need to offer alternatives to the 'dominant models, practices and ideas about development' (Bebbington, Hickey et al. 2008:3). Within this framework, it might be possible to say that IR was attempting to do the business of development differently. They attempted to approach gender justice from a faith perspective rather than infusing normative gender mainstreaming strategies from a secular perspective. Moreover, in the turn to religion era, donor agencies' partnerships with faith actors would suggest that at some level the business of development sought

out marginal strategies. However, as I have argued, the underlying business of development still operated from a top-down approach.

IR in choosing not to take on normative gender and development discourses wholesale into their context and by extension into contexts over there, IR were able to offer counter-hegemonic ideas (Bazán, Cuellar et al. 2008:178) around gender and development, and on gender justice discourses.

This counter-hegemonic approach was present in the GJP, as highlighted in their treatment of the concept of 'gender equality':

‘Standing up for Gender Justice is an active choice for IR because of its centrality to upholding human dignity, which is at the heart of everything we do. We chose the term gender justice because it encapsulates both equity and equality (see Definitions). Within many Muslim communities, the use of the word ‘equality’ often lends itself to controversy because it is perceived as promoting sameness between the genders. It is also associated with certain forms of secular feminism that might see religion as oppressive and/or regressive. In this context, the word ‘equality’ is sometimes seen as threatening to the principles underlying Islamic gender relations, which do not promote sameness between the genders but rather focus on balanced partnership and symbiosis between them. In some circles, this has created a preference for the word equity. However, even among international agencies and organisations focusing on gender issues, there is a strong consensus that, as in this document, equality is not intended to imply sameness between men and women. As

a faith-inspired INGO, we have a moral obligation to explore gender issues through an Islamic lens. The following religious imperative gives us clear guidance, which is our basis for this Gender Justice Policy: ‘You who believe, uphold justice and bear witness to God, even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or your close relatives. Whether the person is rich or poor, God can best take care of both. Refrain from following your own desire, so that you can act justly – if you distort or neglect justice, God is fully aware of what you do.’ [Qur’an 4:135] (GJP:5-6).

Similar to the discussion in the gender chapter, this section highlights some of the tensions that IR had to navigate internally when they had to work with what they classed as contested concepts. In the previous chapter on gender, the key concept of gender had to be moved away from the language of feminism and into the language of religion.

Here the concept of ‘equality’ is also given the same treatment. It too has to be stripped of its history and connection to ‘secular feminism’. In this instance, they explicitly express their resistance to the contested history of secular feminism. Whereas in the previous chapter, on gender, this was implicitly suggested.

In setting up gender equality as a problematic word and one that is framed within the context of secular feminism. IR repeats the binary between (secular) feminism and religion as being uncomfortable bedfellows. The silence within the text is then that religion and feminism are incompatible within the context of IR’s operationalisation of gender/gender justice and within Muslim communities, especially those over there.

This then fails to recognise the different forms of feminist activism, feminist research, and indigenous feminisms that have and continue to influence Muslim majority contexts, historically, and within the contemporary period (as set out within the genealogy chapters two and three).

That is to say, in excluding secular feminism, IR, inadvertently or deliberately, read out and denies all-female/feminist agency. Moreover, it is a denial of Muslim and Islamic feminist and secular Muslim activism undertaken by Muslim women in both Muslim majority and diasporic Muslim communities. Another way to think about this would be to view this as a silencing of the agency, resistance, and politicisation of Muslim women's feminist praxis. Subsequently, this results in the Muslim women over there being silenced. Needing to be spoken for. The door to the Muslim woman as victim narrative is then opened.

In the second part of the text on IR's framing and reframing of gender equality in the GJP. IR's alignment with development agencies and religion, in which the 'moral obligation' argument is reinforced as a comfortable bedfellow, implies that feminism may be absent within the context of development. The language and argument within this statement often echo the discussions and narratives of the interlocutors within the gender chapter. In silencing feminism, IR may have distanced themselves from the history of colonial feminism but failed to recognise that the gender agenda within development was a resurfacing of colonial feminism but one framed within the discourse of development and development leading change.

Also, the silencing of feminism over there simply continues the orientalist discourse in which there is an ossification of Muslim communities as being anti-gender equality. This further situates the argument within orientalist discourses. First, gender equality, as viewed by IR, perpetuates a contested history within communities of Muslims due to its historical legacy of colonial feminism (Ahmed 1992). Second, this contestation is then viewed as oppositional to religion and to undermining Islamic conceptualisations of gender relations, the use of the word and more so the definition of equality as meaning 'sameness between the genders' is then viewed as potentially threatening but why it is threatening is left unsaid.

The definition of equality offered within the text is associated with liberal feminism and is a contested site within 'secular feminism' (Beasley 1999, Hemmings 2011, Zakaria 2021). Thus, while IR problematises this specific definition of 'equality' they do not problematise their acceptance of complementarity within gender relations from an Islamic standpoint. They locate themselves within the conceptualisation of 'gender' as normatively heterosexual and heteronormative, and based on complementarity. This conceptualisation of gender is similar to the (feminist) 'difference' model. IR in essence closes the door on the possibility of offering multiple options for seeking gender justice.

Another way to put this is to suggest that for those over there when it comes to matters of gender justice, IR are offering a cookie-cutter approach but one that is framed within a 'faith perspective', This may be shifting from a secular development script to a sacred script, but, ultimately, this may just be business as usual.

What this might suggest is that any form of alignment with any type of formal feminism might undermine their 'authenticity' as votaries and their 'authority' as religious change makers in aid/development. Moreover, it may undermine their positionality as faith actors in the aid/development field who are focusing on problems in the 'real world'. This may explain why they align themselves with the development sector because of its focus on the material world, and the lived and grounded experiences of the 'recipients' of their services. Most of whom, are over there.

That is to say, faith-based actors in the humanitarian field like IR have to negotiate the multiple dimensions and tensions of being both and simultaneously insiders and outsiders within various locations. Thus, similar to Alice, IR find themselves having to decide when they need to grow taller and/or grow shorter depending on the tensions and messiness they need to negotiate, and only then can they decide on which side the 'gender/gender justice' mushroom of knowledge they need to take a bite from.

Faith actors, similar to feminist policy actors, may find themselves having to square off with similar contradictions between having to use gender and or religion or both for instrumental reasons and their desire to promote gender justice in its own right (Eyben 2010:60). Equally, in attempting to infuse religion, the extent to which faith actors in development can change discourses and power relations (Eyben 2010:54) from within the margins of development is equally silenced. Particularly if the two-way learning process remains one-sided in which faith actors are asked to undertake or operate within a 'dual register' (Lonergan, Lewis et al. 2021).

Within a dual register faith actors may maintain a secular professional public face when working with donors while maintaining and shifting registers between secular and sacred scripts when operating with other faith actors (and religious subjects) (Tomalin 2020:22). It is through a shifting scale of the language of religion and the language of development that faith actors' experiences of the turn to religion need to be understood.

Emma Tomalin (2020:23), has argued that binary theories of secular and the post-secular are inadequate for the task of capturing the shifting register¹⁰⁰.

Tomalin (2020:23), calls for a new framework from the viewpoint of FBOs, claiming that a faith-logic is part of the operating worldview of faith actor engagement.

Dividing practices – internal faith actors and external faith actors

According to Tomalin (2020:23), if religious dynamics in the public sphere are to be understood in the contemporary social world it needs to be neither secular nor religious, but as a whole, and of intersecting fields¹⁰¹. I agree with Tomalin, that binary theories are troubling. However, I depart from her in that although she does recognise that UK FBOs engage with local faith actors within the Global South, whom she argues may be unfamiliar with global development discourses. I suggest that this simply presents an othering and difference between these two sets of faith actors. Subsequently, this subjectification

¹⁰⁰ Tomalin (2020) focused on the SDGs of actor-orientated experiences of faith actors within development.

¹⁰¹ Tomalin (2020) draws on Pierre Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' (whilst I do not use the same tools – I do use the idea of thinking tools in chapter four).

through the discourse of leading development change to the Other whilst aligning Western-based Muslim faith actors with the normative Us in development, then continues to Other the (faith) actors in development in the Global South as inferior. As the following quote demonstrates, here the interlocutor offers an example from the field. IR as a UK FBO engage with local faith actors within the Global South but what this example shows is that Tomalin's assessment negates that development actors within the Global South may already be involved in more sophisticated ways of doing development differently:

‘So, in some areas of Mali this practice is held in such high regard, unnecessarily, and then there, there was a point in the dialogue where the distinction was made that it's not religion that puts the pressure on having this done, it's actually society and culture. So I was really happy that this distinction was made because it's very difficult when you are speaking to people and, and they think that well this what Islam is, and, and if this what they think Islam is, then already it's been tainted with that kind of negativity and, and that very harmful and doesn't give people their right...it was a very interesting journey, surprisingly conversation in Pakistan, and discussions with colleagues from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines...were all very supportive of these hard taboo topics and they, they've already engaged faith leaders on these issues and tried to find people that understand and who would support the advocacy around these issues. So it's been very challenging...time trying to make these connections and overcome some of stereotypes and make the distinction

between culture and religion and that when you are making that distinction, you are not actually classifying that cultural, that culture as wrong. It's something that has continued through know hundreds of years, you cannot label or stigmatise that community for having this practice, but it's how you move forward from this step. Point, how can you stop harming girls. Harming babies, harming children, and what can we do to try and break these practices...So it's not stereotyping, labelling, stigmatising, but empowering...that was very crucial for us, to make sure we don't walk away actually do more harm than good' (I 27: 7-8)

In the discussion earlier, on subjectification through the discourse of leading development change to the Other, I have explored how the shift towards the idea that the turn to religion era in development discourses may have resulted in IR and faith actors in development being viewed in terms of being the technical rational subject, who led change to Others.

In the above quote, the new Orientalist acknowledges that development actors in the Global South have been leading on change. Yet, the culture talk narrative entrenched within the Orientalist discourse script is heard. This might suggest that Orientalist frameworks in which the 'other' is conceived on a historical construction of 'difference as otherness' (McNay 2013:6) within development discourses, may not have undergone, similar to academic fields such as anthropology and feminism, a clearing and creation of a space for the 'other' (McNay 2013:4) over there. However, this space for the Other, over here, as the technical rational subject is framed as a positive Subject. Thus, in clearing a

space for the Other (here) as the technical rational subject, might the implication be that there are: 'other ways of thinking and being'? (McNay 2013:4). And, if there are other ways of thinking and being, then might these challenge universal claims and social practices that result in marginalisation, degradation, and exclusion? Perhaps significantly, it reveals practices with which the other cannot cope (McNay 2013:4). As I have explored above, the turn to religion era within development discourses and the offshoring of knowledge generation to IR, through the faith literacy project, when seen through the concept of the technical rational subject, defines faith actors as being both subjectivizing and objectivizing forces (McNay 2013:12) As the following quote suggests:

'...it wasn't very easy if I'm being honest with you, it did take a lot of dialogue, a lot of very uncomfortable conversations...We're very much on, on the, on the journey now and there's been a lot of great pieces of work between child protection and gender, coz, once we looked at issues of harmful practices, such as FGM/C or early forced marriage, there's definitely an interlock between the two thematical areas and...it much more easier explaining to communities from a faith angle, what rights are, but because rights, rights have been tainted and misunderstood by society as something that westerns come in and kind of, unsettle their stable families, that they don't want to hear...' (1 27:3-4)

The technical rational subject (here) may be conceived, by the business of development, as having internalised the dominant development discourse, through the disciplinary techniques of development. Muslim faith actors in development over here are classified as technically superior in leading change

to Others, over there. However, in setting up this difference between Muslim faith actors in the UK with those in the Global South, points of power and points of resistance are also heard within the above quote. I will now explore some of the ways these points of power and resistance showed up at IR.

Points of power and points of resistance

Tomalin in proposing that the 'habitas and capital combination' (Tomalin 2020:23) of UK FBOs enables them to engage within the field of secular global development and act as development brokers and translators with local faith actors, seems to do so on the assumption that these relationships are without resistance. Furthermore, the brokerage undertaken between these different faith actors share the same registers or for that matter that the development being offered, within those contexts, is wanted. As the following quotes show:

‘...the organisation felt that we weren’t really reflecting our faith values in our work particularly, that we were, we had become over the years quite secular really, we didn’t have a deep faith discourse about development and gender and about almost anything...humanitarian sector is extremely secular...we weren’t really being able to communicate very well with our beneficiaries around these issues, so we and gender was one of those areas which we weren’t really literate in. So, we tended to work with very traditional Muslim communities who have very gendered roles, and you know, very sort of cultural understandings...’ (I26:3)

‘I was in Mali, and we did a session on FGMC, and during that conversation, one of my colleagues was very vocal that how can you

come in and tell us about our culture and our religious practice, who has given you the right?' (I27:7)

Both quotes draw out the points of resistance and the power relations that shape the brokerage of development discourses. It also points to the different registers that faith actors in development in the UK operate within, which questions their capital and habitus. While binary theories and binaries are troubling, in the 'real world' binaries are operative. In both these quotes, the cultural narrative is heard, and these are not based on a shared register of a faith-based worldview. As the following quote, highlights:

'...so we are quite aware that this is an Islamic understanding rather than the Islamic understanding, but we have led these consultations within the organisations, such that there is an understanding around this particular understanding and this our understanding of it, you may fault us if it is very explicit in this document that, look, this is our position and this is the faith understanding from which we derive it from, and we are not imposing it on other or anything, anyone could have their understanding, but we have made it explicit so that it is clear where we are coming from, in terms of that faith understanding' (I21:19)

The quotes above, not only imply that the faith-based worldviews are different, but it ossifies the culture of the Other. What is more, the new Orientalist repeats the trope of the Other as carriers of tradition and the Self as mediators of tradition (Grewal 2014:296). In the first quote (I26) the interlocutor refers to the organisation's lack of a 'deep faith' before the return to religion. The suggestion

is that IR were internally disconnected from their beneficiaries over there. Yet, in the previous section another interlocutor (I25), juxtaposed the lack of a 'deep faith' externally. That is to say, the brokerage that Tomalin (2020) describes, I suggest might be read as the playing out of the mechanism of Orientalism. In which faith actors within development are (not intentionally) caught within the mechanism of knowledge/power dynamics and the mechanisms of re-orientalism. I argue that the faith literacy project during the turn to religion era may have operationalised the Muslim question within development. In which the Muslim question may have been inverted and simultaneously been formed within the context of the post-9/11 era.

Dividing practices – the native informant and going native

In these quotes, the disciplinary techniques and dividing practices between different groups evoke the good and bad Islam as framed within the Muslim question. The idea of UK FBOs as brokers then further reinforces a suggestion of the native informant who has been trained to translate the different scripts. As the following quotes would suggest:

'...I spoke to the social mobilisation manager at the time...I did ask for the learning and I fed this all the way through the system...She just needed that time for a three-year project...actually being there and live amongst them, work amongst them for the appropriate amount of time, so you gain their trust, otherwise, you will always be seen as the outsider and I think it probably helped that in these villages Islamic Relief was the only organisation, one of the very few organisations working over there. One of the major challenges you find some areas is that all NGOs are

working there, well not all, but a vast majority of them. Often, it's because it's right next to the main road, and so everyone wants to go there because it is easy, no one wants to go off the main road in two hours of banging their heads on the top of the car, and so the impact in these is often a lot less because people become dependent...our project was very good...we were trying to train, and women as well as, we trying to not just give out seeds, but trying to get them to grow their own seeds...that way they won't have buy them again...but even though we trained them, they didn't buy into it...when I asked them why they said, well another NGO is going to come at the end of the year, give us them...even though they were lesser quality, ours were much better quality...so it is dependency...is a major issue in our NGO work...and this is both male and female as well, unfortunately.' (I 23:18-19)

In the second quote, the new Orientalist recognises the disconnect between policy and field but occupies the role of gathering knowledge on the other:

'...how has the application of the gender justice policy from a programme perspective is different to the field? I think based at HQ it's much more easier for us to develop policies here and, and get people to have input, then it is to translate that in the field. I think it is very naïve of people work either in the UK or any other developed setting, with the notion that these products will then be used in the...field offices, because unless you've seen their life...you are developing something out of context...I travelled to nearly twelve countries last year and it was overwhelming every time I travelled because you see different challenges in different communities

in different cultures, and that one tool will not apply in all settings. So, for example, I went to Pakistan, Islamabad in February and then I went to Pakistan, Peshawar in early August and through its Pakistan, it was complete different settings...there was definitely a difference in the way that colleagues from Islamabad office engaged with me and that way that the team in Peshawar engaged me. They were both amazing within information and sharing, they were very transparent and they were very vocal about the actual needs of women and children in their context, but I think it's very important that when people are working on, on tools or resources or materials that you hope will empower these communities, that there is some actual exposure and that you understand and you have that kind of lens that you are working through.' (I 27:4-5)

IR's (enforced) collaboration in engaging with the development turn to religion narrative and their re-turning to religion narrative, allows for questioning whether it might be too early to consider Orientalist tropes to be dead. Instead, the experiences of faith actors in development might offer ways to explore the complexities of power relations that operate within development. Perhaps even raising these tropes back from the dead, through re-orientalising both them and the us, in which the binary construction of Muslims and Islam when framed within concepts of good and bad are then still positioned on a familiar form of hegemonic power relations being played out based on knowledge/power and resistance (Foucault 1978, Feder 2014).

The constructs of good and bad Muslims/Islam are still based on othering the deviant Muslim from the normative Us. In internally dividing Muslims from

Muslims, the conceptualisation might then be along the lines of an internal 'other' and external 'other' (Topolski 2018:2190). In taking this argument towards a possible conclusion rather than challenging the Orientalist trope, the turn to religion discourse in development may have maintained the Orientalist discourse. However, now the orientalist discourse is something that is done by an internal other to an external other, both over here and over there. What is more, it is now being done over there by new Orientalists from over here.

That is to say, the structural traces of Orientalism persisted within development discourses. Where development discourses on religion continued to view religion as being a foreign land within the construction of a secular West. As the following quote would seem to suggest:

'we could have come up with a very secular...gender justice policy...but the fact that we said we are a faith based organisation...also recognising how difficult...faith domains and faith questions are within kind of Islam and within Islamic organisations and also within a lot of the communities where we work in, where kind of faith, their faith whether its Christian or Muslim, is very strong...part of the social fabric and...the kind of purpose of the gender justice policies to use kind of in some ways, peoples, rather than using a very secular approach to gender justice, which we are not...in a lot if traditional communities we work could be viewed as a very kind of a westerning position, rather than using kind of something which is, using faith as something which would more, more acceptable were using faith as a tool for people to listen to you and to, and using faith as a...means of communicating within people and...when faith is such a

strong important part in people's life and when you put a faith lens to some of the development work we do people will engage with you...people will kind of see...maybe why things should be a certain way and what, if you are talking about gender, why gender justice and gender equality is so important. Why women have equal gender rights as men, so yeah...that was all kind of reasons for using gender, for using faith and...so the gender policy did have a faith angle, or I was approached from a faith angle...and I don't think it kind of comes up very, very strongly I'm, in the policy itself.' (I 30:9-10)

This argument would seem to suggest that faith actors' experiences within the turn to religion era were through an enforced collaboration with the ruling powers. For Muslim FBOs, like IR, who were engaging with and mobilising religious knowledge in partnership with development narratives. The process of producing religious knowledge on faith literacy development and gender justice might be better understood through the frame of a Muslim-on-Muslim engagement, and one that may have been shaped within the 'Muslim question' (Topolski 2018).

Reframing the Muslim Question from victim to free agency¹⁰²

However, a deeper dive into the faith actors' experience and their partnership with mainstream developments turn to religion narrative, when viewed through

¹⁰² From a Foucauldian perspective, relationships of power, even unbalanced relationships, exist within particular power relations, within which there are the possibilities of resistance. This assumption of resistance is based on Foucault's belief that individuals are 'free' people and that the relations of power are between individuals who have agency.

Foucault's approach to power may offer new ways to understand the faith actors' experiences. According to Foucault's understanding, power is 'produced and reproduced in social relations' and in a 'network of relations' that are in continuous tensions in activity (Engstrand and Enberg 2020:337).

This fluid and diffuse understanding of power allows for rummaging at the roots of the Muslim question. That is, when the Muslim question is turned upside down, and re-framed not from the point of view of the 'system of oppression' from the normative Us gaze or the victim gaze (Topolski 2018:2189), the Muslim question is no longer framed as a problem, which requires solving or managing (Topolski 2018:2189).

Instead of a vertical, top-down, hierarchical application of power and knowledge, I offer a heterarchical approach, as this offers new ways to draw out nuanced complexities.

That is to say, the Muslim question is not new within the context of the Islamic tradition. Rather if we view Islam as rooted in how people talk, act, and interact with others, social relations can be understood as discursive practices wherein 'free actors' within discursive frameworks have the power to mobilise knowledge, whereby different subjectivities can be resisted (Engstrand and Enberg 2020:337-338). If Islam is understood as a discursive tradition, as suggested by Talal Asad (1996), then Muslims have historically always been engaged with the Muslim question.

If the Muslim question is framed from the position of the normative Us, that is, Muslim. The mobilisation of religious knowledge and the engagement with

gender justice might be understood from within a heterarchical process of knowledge/power that provides constraints and opportunities within a 'discursive infrastructure' (Engstrand and Enberg 2020:339). In this case study, a discursive infrastructure might be the turn to religion discourse within development. I suggest within a specific discursive infrastructure, such as the turn to religion discourse, knowledge production might be viewed as a 'local production of knowledge' (Engstrand and Enberg 2020:339).

What I am experimenting with is how to operationalise the theory of power offered by Foucault, in which he claimed that the 'subjective positioning' be viewed on the 'systemic regulation of people's lives' (Foucault 1978, Engstrand and Enberg 2020:339). According to Foucault (1978), knowledge is connected to power and the operation of power; in this way, power is relational (Engstrand and Enberg 2020:338).

For Foucault (1978:9) power is both everywhere and comes from everywhere. If this capillary-like power is the starting point, any attempt to trace power would require doing so in multiple directions (Engstrand and Enberg 2020:338).

In the next section that follows, I will use the GJP and the faith actors' experience of mobilising knowledge to explore how the faith actors different subjectivities may have resisted, accommodated, rejected, constrained, and provided opportunities to exercise power and how the use of dividing practices, technologies of the self and technologies of domination over others (Engstrand and Enberg 2020:339), and the panoptic mechanism played out in this case. Furthermore, in the next section, I use the GJP to draw out the earlier

discussions on the silencing of feminisms as played out in this case. I begin the section by framing this discussion through the lens of gender mainstreaming in development. In that gender mainstreaming within development has been viewed as a technocratic approach to undertaking social justice on gender.

The disappearing and reappearing Cheshire cat of feminism

In the previous section, in terms of the faith literacy project, I made the argument that religion at IR had become part of the technocratic process to infuse religion into existing ways of doing. Moreover, the enforced collaboration through gender with the ruling power resulted in IR producing a gender (justice) policy to meet donor compliance. In this section, I hone in on the GJP to offer an analysis of how the enforced collaboration with gender (in development) may be considered as the reframing of colonial feminism during the turn to religion era within the business of development.

In the period in which this case is set, gender mainstreaming had been the dominant gender model in development. For this reason, a gender mainstreaming lens alongside Foucault's theories of disciplinary power through which to read the GJP offers new ways to understand how when the Muslim question is inverted, a heterarchical reading may offer new insights into Muslim faith actor-orientated approaches to the turn to religion.

According to Nicholas Pialek (2008:279), who located his analysis on gender mainstreaming through a case study of Oxfam GB, the death of gender mainstreaming was due to its ineffectiveness in delivering on promoting social justice on gender and creating substantial change in the institutions and within

the practices of organisations at a global or local level (Pialek 2008:279).

Furthermore, Pialek argues that the shift from the category of women to the category of gender in development led to a 'depoliticization of the feminist project' (Pialek 2008:279). As a result, he claimed that gender mainstreaming came to be labelled as a technocratic approach, devoid of any feminism (Pialek 2008:279).

At Oxfam, Pialek (2008:292) observed that gender mainstreaming was focused on external change within the context of the 'real world' and a focus on what can be achieved at the programme and project level. In avoiding feminism, IR's experience is similar to other development organisations, in that development discourses prioritise the mechanisms of technocratic processes on external change, over there.

However, despite the use of the term gender within IR. The GJP's focus is on the category of women. This would seem to go against the general tide of development practice but chime with development feminist cries for a return to empowerment projects that focus on women (Eveline and Bacchi 2005, Porter and Sweetman 2005, Piálek 2008). By focusing on the woman question and women's empowerment at a grassroots level,¹⁰³ IR is revisiting various forms of

¹⁰³ The document is also sprinkled with colourful photos. These photos include men and women and children, from within majority Muslim country contexts, and highlight projects that IR are engaged in. These pictures show women and men in various social and gender roles. They are often depicted within domestic contexts, such as within a (heteronormative/sexual) family or extended family unit. In other words, women are seen as mothers, wives, elders: men are depicted as husbands, fathers, elders. And children, are part of family units. Another context shown is within the realm of work, primarily economic labour in the 'field' literally at times, and in terms of physical labour, gathering food. In all cases the women are observing normative and cultural attire as are the men; and in the case of women, this includes the covering of their head. There is one photo of a man feeding his children, in the context of a humanitarian crisis,

feminist storytelling (Hemmings 2011) as offered in genealogy chapters two and three. What I am suggesting is that IR's decision to be untroubled by feminism may not be dissimilar to the experiences of non-faith actors in development. The implication is that within international development, feminism is silenced. Thus, new actors within development can continue to silence feminism and be accommodated within development. If the argument is that feminism has been co-opted as an 'alternative' approach to development, within international development discourses, and then promptly silenced within a range of institutions and organisations (Walby 2005, Piálek 2008:280), then the experience at IR would bear this out.

In the case of IR, their gender mainstreaming process included the formal adoption of a gender (justice) policy. The enforced collaboration with gender required them to undertake gender mainstreaming techniques including the development of a gender mainstreaming policy. The organisational turn to gender offers new ways to consider how the disappearing and reappearing Cheshire cat of feminism may operate within different contexts.

which may suggest a subversion of normative gender roles in which 'care giving' is often associated with women and less so with men. However, there are no photos of women in leadership roles, or in urban contexts. Rather, these pictures are often in rural settings in various locations in the Global South. And while this then maintains the development imagery of an orientalist imaginary of the 'poor' as being 'over there', these images do not explicitly conform to the subtext that is familiar within development narratives that work on the premise of before and after, or to put it another way, before intervention and after invention. However, in this case, they have not done so. In using photos where the subjects are often smiling, the use of these images depict a sense of harmony, cooperation, family unity, and even the notion of 'empowerment' arises, particularly as one the photos includes a woman holding up a hand-made poster with the words: '#I am Iqra. I am women empowerment'.

For now, I argue that IR's deliberate intent to silence feminism in vast areas of the GJP (as heard in the chapter on gender) was possible because it is a recognised practice within development. That is to say, the argument to silence feminism within the GJP and the organisation was not based on religion, although it did strengthen IR's ability to position itself within the language of religion. Rather, development discourses operate on a mechanism in which alternative approaches are silenced and yet, they continue to operate within the margins, but not at the centre of development.

Dividing practices - silencing of feminism

If the depoliticization of feminism within development has resulted in the silencing of feminism - wherein the language of feminism and the language of development does not complicate discourses - then equally, the language of religion and the language of development can remain uncomplicated.

I am experimenting with the idea that in the case of feminism if it resulted in the depoliticization of the feminist project. In the case of religion, perhaps it is possible to say that it may have resulted in (re)orientalism. Rather than decolonising development discourses, the language and mechanism of development, including the academic discourses and knowledge production, remain separate and can only operate within specific contexts.

That is to say, without complicating discourses and uniting discourses then binary formulations of centre/periphery, hegemony and counter-hegemony simply repeat. In this formulation, religion, as an alternative approach to development, is then similar to feminism, in that it is reduced to a technocratic

process, in which Muslim faith actors in development are part of the mechanism of producing knowledge on the Other. Consequently, the new Orientalists, who due to their insider-outsider positionality, become docile bodies engaged in the normalising effects of knowledge/power and resistance, (Feder 2014, Foucault 2016) under the disciplinary power of development discourses. The following quote from the interlocutor would seem to underscore this:

‘I’m not sure there is necessarily a faith aspect to the programmes. I think we still help anyone regardless of race, religion, gender, which is a faith thing I suppose...when it comes to the field it’s all about just being professional. I am not sure to what extent faith actually comes into that aspect of the work. I think generally we come into the work because our faith and you know, it really motivates me quite strongly...but when it comes to the actual doing the work, I am not sure faith necessarily, at least for me...being professional and being professional is part of a faith things as well I suppose...’ (I 23:6)

SHAPING OF THE GENDER JUSTICE POLICY AT IR THROUGH GENDER (MAINSTREAMING) AND DEVELOPMENT

IR’s GJP was published in April 2015. It appeared on their website as a public document available to download in English, French, and Arabic. According to the website, the document focuses on:

‘...the central components of IR’s Gender Justice Policy based on an Islamic framework. It outlines the organisation’s commitments to gender justice in all our humanitarian, development and advocacy work and our internal processes and procedures. Standing up for gender justice is a

priority for IR because of its centrality to upholding human dignity, which is at the heart of everything we do.’ (Taken from IR’s website¹⁰⁴).

On the website description, the emphasis on the centrality of the GJP as being framed within an Islamic framework would seem to imply which types of knowledge they include (e.g. Islamic based knowledge systems) and what they exclude and, therefore, silence (e.g. feminist and western knowledge systems).

Furthermore, it then incorporates the language of development and situates the location in which the GJP and their modality of gender justice praxis are to operate. In that, the GJP is context-specific to IR and its work within the fields of humanitarian, development, and advocacy.

In particular, the GJP and IR’s commitment to gender justice is mostly an operational undertaking of internal procedures and processes. This could be read as a form of gender mainstreaming.

Finally, the organisation’s commitment to gender justice is connected to the core values of human dignity. That they do not lead with the final statement and then detail how they intend to do that within IR, would seem to suggest that the order presented in the above statement, might inadvertently be the order of importance for the organisation.

In sum, gender justice within the context of IR is a process through which to ensure that operations and internal mechanisms of the business of humanitarian and development engagement are ‘gender just’.

¹⁰⁴ [Gender Justice - Islamic Relief Worldwide \(islamic-relief.org\)](http://islamic-relief.org)

In the following quote, the interlocutor offers a reflection on the practical impact of the GJP on the organisation. The reflection confirms that in the context of IR, the GJP was the mechanism through which they undertook the internal operational processes to engage with the thematic area of gender (in development). The interlocutor details all the measurable and instrumental internal processes and procedural types of engagement that have occurred since the GJP went live.

Interlocutor: '...from where I sit now and I have been away from the main Islamic Relief...from the actual practice on the ground, I could see several things; 1) I could see that gender is now incorporated into the introduction of all staff. So all new staff were having an induction course, there is gender site, this is part of what the policy...Secondly, I understood and again you have ask whether it is practice, but there was definitely an adoption of it in the policy and procedure, that with new projects being developed, there needs to be a check box or something that shows that someone has read it and seen that it is gender aware and has involved, and is not going to do harm based on gender or something, so that is two. Three, I have seen that there have been a number of more dedicated gender-related projects on the ground happening. Some of three-year project on gender in WASH, which in water sanitation and hygiene programmes. I have seen advocacy team run with gender-based violence campaigns for almost two/three years looking at this, and there have been offspring of the policy in other publications in different areas. So there have been positions on FGM and

child marriage, domestic violence with reports there have been a global level advocacy on those, through the UN, through the CSW and others, there have been workshops and trainings on all of this happening. There is now a programme in the programme quality team looking at the intersectionality of gender and disability gender, this gender and that. The microfinance programme is looking at gender in how it does this and so on, some of our data are now developed to be disaggregated so that you can take, we could collect information on what we are doing based on what is happening to men and women, boys and girls and so on, and this all happened and the momentum pushed by that process and that policy...even within the culture of the organisation, I think there is now a bit recognition about the position of women within the organisation, but a) we don't have many females working in the organisations, b) even the few have are not in senior positions and c) that there are certain aspects, so I know that a couple of years ago we had to revise our whole maternity policy and the benefits that people get...I know that there is a conscious move and actual activity to put more female talent into the organisation...70% of interns are female I now have in my department, I tell you I am the only male out of six of us...all this happened due to a conscious decision to address this gender imbalance in our staffing...' (I21:12-13)

Interviewer: 'Would you describe that as gender mainstreaming?'

Interlocutor: 'I don't like the word mainstreaming. I think I would just describe it is that we are really aware of gender and making, not just

conscious policies, procedures and things, but actually actions actually address some of those imbalances that are happening and also, to push it right through into our programs, now how far that gone you can argue with that, whether it's fast enough and whether it's good enough, but at least I know that this is what happening and that momentum going and we now have a permanent gender advisor, which we never had before this process happened. So again, that is something that I think is positive (I 21:13)

While the interlocutor does not like the word 'mainstreaming', the description that they provide of the various types and forms of internal organisational shifts in accommodating gender into the organisation maps neatly onto their four strategic areas¹⁰⁵ that informed the key components of the GJP. The four strategic areas identified are internal processes and procedures that the organisation wanted to address concerning gender and gender justice.

That is to say, IR had a shopping list of instrumental aims, which they presented in the GJP. These instrumental aims were framed within the language of development and the language of gender mainstreaming within the GJP. The ticking off of the shopping list of positive changes and the raised gender consciousness within the organisation, as offered by the interlocutor, might then be viewed as a gender mainstreaming success story. That is, depending on whether gender mainstreaming is viewed as an instrumental or substantive

¹⁰⁵ In the section on 'Our strategic gender commitments' section the GJP identifies four specific areas of focus: (i) Gender responsiveness in Humanitarian action (ii) Gender programming in the development context, (iii) Gender advocacy, (iv) Institutional arrangements – each specific area has a further shopping listing of areas that wish to operationalise

feminist project (Moser 1993, Jahan 1995, Moser and Moser 2005 , Walby 2005).

The reason I suggest it might be considered a development (feminist) success story is that if gender mainstreaming within development is taken as:

‘a strategic approach for achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment at all levels of development.’ ([Gender Mainstreaming In Development Programming | UN Women – Headquarters](#))

Then the definition stated by the UN Women gender mainstreaming strategy when set against the starting point within IR, which took a non-feminist approach, to include gender at all levels of development and that gender is now part of IR, does appear to be a development (feminist) success story. The example of IR offers an interesting case study of how the disappearing and reappearing Cheshire Cat of feminism might complicate discourses and feminist storytelling on gender mainstreaming. In this instance, the mechanism of gender mainstreaming would seem to accommodate feminist aims and goals into new contexts that may have once viewed such goals as gender equality and women’s empowerment as hostile.

The perceived degree of change at IR, as suggested by the above interlocutor, without the formal use of the language of feminism, might suggest that gender mainstreaming as the strategic approach and goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women at all levels of development is happening. The example of IR, in the extent and breadth of change that took place within the

context of the organisation, highlights how, seemingly, incongruent ideas can come together within locations that may have resisted feminist goals.

Thus, in tracing IR's experience, from the absence of a formal policy on gender/gender justice to the struggles to accommodate gender, then to drawing up a GJP, and subsequently, gaining internal agreement on the GJP. Indeed, infusing both gender and gender justice (policy) into the organisation may be viewed as a remarkable technocratic management success story.

That gender mainstreaming as a mechanism for translating the twin goals offers an insight into how instrumental goals and the integration of gender/a gender justice policy into so many different aspects of IR operational activities spotlights how gender and feminism may repeat here, even when (feminist) storytelling is done differently (Hemmings 2011).

From a development reading of the example of IR, it might be possible to consider this a form of feminist storytelling in that gender mainstreaming is happening at all levels of development, even if it may be an instrumental gain/or only at the level of integration. That is to say, if the development goal is to bring all levels of development into strategically approaching gender equality and the empowerment of women, then perhaps the depoliticization of the feminist project within gender mainstreaming in development (Piálek 2008) may, in this instance, have ensured that gender could be accommodated. If, however, the goal is to bring feminism into all levels of development, then perhaps gender mainstreaming in this context might also be complicated.

The formal absence of the language of feminism in IR might imply that feminism operates undercover (Pacholok 2016); I touched on this in the previous chapter. The reason I suggest feminism is undercover is that interestingly many of the changes identified by the interlocutor are internal to the organisation.

The impact of gender mainstreaming in this example is at an operational level, in which, gender has been integrated within the consciousness of the organisation, thereby suggesting that perhaps the organisation had been previously unconscious of gender. Moreover, the absence of the language of feminism, in the example of IR, while remaining unproblematised by the interlocutor has been appropriated through the language of development.

That is to say, within international development, part of the reason why the language of feminism can be resisted by new development actors, who can even celebrate the successful integration of gender into their context without the language of feminism, might be because the language of feminism has become part of the technologies of domination within international development discourses through the mechanism of gender mainstreaming.

That is to say, if the business of international development is considered as operating from the centre, faith development actors (as in at IR) are classified as operating on the margins of development. In operating within or from the margins, alternative development actors would be used to operating within a different space. However, in coming into the development centre, by way of reconciling (if only temporarily) contradictory cultures of differences between the centre and the margin and to reduce Othering and further marginalisation when

they enter into the centre, the resistance to the language of feminism might be considered a form of strategic essentialism (Morton 2003). In this way, faith actors can undertake the strategic approach to bring about the technocratic process of bringing gender into the organisation.

That is to say if strategic essentialism is understood as a situational strategy, undertaken by an oppressed/marginal or marginalised group, in which the marginal group intentionally take on essentialist categories about themselves to resist or disrupt the dominance that marginalises them within a specific context (Spivak 1993 in Morton 2003). The resistance to the language of feminism and the silencing of feminism is a form of resistance to the dominant development discourse of the enforced collaboration to gender (by the ruling power) and the mechanisms of Othering.

The dominance of the mechanism of othering relies on dividing practices within the Western intellectual cultural baggage. According to Foucault, technologies of domination require disciplining techniques, Foucault explained disciplinary power as:

‘...may have a hold over others’ bodies, not only so that they do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, ‘docile’ bodies’
(Foucault 1991:137-138 in Markula and Pringle 2006:39)

That is to say, the short-term strategy to uphold a political identity as a subaltern voice of resistance to the technologies of domination may offer a point of power

and resistance to the dominant discourses that as marginal actors entering into othered spaces need to negotiate. Moreover, as the Other, in this space, the enforced collaboration with gender would mean that to strategically approach gender equality and women's empowerment at all levels of development, the resistance offered to the language of feminism might also be understood as an act of strategic essentialism as a short-term strategy for infusing gender into existing ways of doing.

Strategic essentialism may also act as a form of agency. For the specific group of faith actors at IR who were invested in undertaking gender (justice) at IR, strategic essentialism may have provided a useful tactic to mobilise to act temporarily to reach a goal: gender mainstreaming.

The mechanism of gender mainstreaming: strategic essentialism at IR

The following exchange with the previous interlocutor (I21) would seem to highlight how at IR the power/knowledge and resistance, and the technologies of domination, alongside strategic essentialism played out:

Interviewer: '...would you say then that this policy represents the organisational position?'

Interlocutor: 'I would say that, absolutely, I would say it represents the organisational position, but again, as I said, it doesn't mean that everyone in the organisation agrees or buys into it. There are some who are uncomfortable with certain section of it, but in the in the end, not only does it have I think, broad consensus, I wouldn't call it broad, but broad

buy in, but it also has legitimacy because the legitimacy organs in the organisation were the ones that adopted it.'

Interviewer: 'Such as?'

Interlocutor: '...the Board of Directors, Board of Trustees, Senior Managers, all of them had inputted into the discussions and agree to this...it's been adopted and so, is because it's also not a theoretical, I don't know if I made this point loud enough. It's not just a theoretical thing, it is not a think piece on gender, it's not an airy-fairy position on gender, we have grounded it in our work. So we have looked at our strategy and said, the strategy has four pillars and therefore, we need to see how what concrete positions would you take that would lead to action in each of these four pillars' (I 21:11-12).

In the quote below, on the same topic of how the GJP has translated into and been operationalised within the organisation, the 'positive changes' narrative offered by the previous interlocutor (I21), is broken down into a more nuanced reading of power and heterosexual dynamics of gender relations. The interlocutor offers a feminist undercover narrative of how normative heterosexual dynamics of gender may repeat feminist and religious narratives that construct gender based on sex categories of male and female within the internal institutional arrangements of the employees who work in the UK headquarters. Thereby untroubling the gender binary model that came through within the chapter on gender:

'...if you...sit in a meeting and you...with the CO, with HR and there's talk about recruitment and needing more women...it's...always a few women who speak up. So there's is that collective push from women colleagues, it's not there...and I suppose because of the...cultural kind of...I don't know it's difficult to explain. I mean...even in this project which was about gender kind of, gender challenges it was, and when you talked about gender...gender challenges it was, most of the talk was about...in some ways important, but in the bigger picture inconsequential stuff like the conditions of the female toilets or...we have children so we should be allowed to work from home, flexible hours and oh, why can't women go to the games rooms and play table tennis and most of the conversations is about that. I mean, and not about, what do we do to get more females in and why is it when interviews happen and there is a male and female candidate, I mean we don't even have to wait for the results, we know that the female candidate is not, I mean you're telling me they are not enough qualified, where men are...the organisation it is very flexible in terms of...if you have a child and your child's ill. No one is going to question it... realises your role as your kind of reproductive role, I mean in some ways maybe it puts more precedence on the reproductive role and the productive role of women and the organisation, so...if I am fair, a lot of the women are quite happy with that...another reason it's still very male-dominated organisation and with...various opinion about women and where their places are and what they can do, and that should not do and we...I mean, if I am very brutally honest, our

whole board of directors are very, very traditional and very conservative in...how they viewed their faith and how that kind of coloured their life and their beliefs..this board of directors is slightly more open and...I suppose we still kind of live in a world which is very patriarchal, which is very dominated by men and in an organisation, which is very kind of men, where it's very...structure is such that most of the senior management are male. They kind of don't probably see it as much as a priority as, as females do in...the organisation.' (I 30: 13-14)

Similar to the interlocutor in the previous chapter on gender, who undertook a feminism undercover approach, and spoke through the language of feminism. This interlocutor also articulates a strong feminist vocabulary. In the quote above, the interlocutor races through different forms of feminist storytelling. The struggles of female utility and docility as disciplined bodies are heard, through the twin narrative of female bodies that hold a reproductive role and how the female body is disciplined in their productive role as workers within the context of various power structures.

The female reproductive role is recognised and even valorised within the organisational context, in that both female staff members can demand acknowledgement of their double role (thereby suggesting a form of agency). That the organisation supports the reproductive role and demands on female staff, by enabling female staff to prioritise this role over the productive role/labour, could be read as a recognition of the differential priorities and roles that women occupy with public and private reproductive and productive roles/labour within society.

That is to say, the unpaid reproductive labour of women is not marginalised or seen as private in the organisational context. Rather, the acknowledgement of the differential needs of female staff to respond to the demands of the reproductive labour of women, within the context of the organisation is not separated between the private and public sphere. The reason for why this may be so is associated with the choice to use the gender binary model, in which gender is viewed along sex categories of female and male. It may also be due to the resistance to a gender equality model.

However, another reading of this may be that the development model of add women and stir continues to operate within development settings, and whilst the model brings women into the public sphere and paid work, it also acts to discipline the female body into the docile body who has a utility in the productive role of worker. The utility of the female docile body to productive labour however remains undervalued. In that, female staff members are engaged in small acts of resistance to hierarchical power structures around 'inconsequential conditions' and access to different spaces within the organisation that have yet to accommodate women. Another way to think about this is that the add women and stir model infuses the female docile body into the existing ways of doing and organising (Eyben 2010).

Both the first (I21) and the second (I30) interlocutor focus on gender concerning women in the context of organisational arrangements, despite using the term gender. The first interlocutor invites the idea that the gender ratio in his department is reversed to the norm. The second interlocutor draws attention to the normalisation of gender hierarchies in terms of positions of power within

organisations configured on hierarchical structures that still favour the dominance of males.

Neither addresses how non-elite males in the organisation are adjusting to the formal introduction of gender and women into the organisation. The following quote however offers a glimpse and picks up on the theme of cross-gender dynamics when (religious subjects) encounter Muslim-on-Muslim engagement in the gender and the workplace, as discussed in the methodology chapter around self-disciplinary techniques and the panoptical process:

‘...I shook your hand earlier, there are people around the world, even in Islamic Relief who would say no, a man should never shake a woman’s hand in that kind of way, and I, yeah, you might take that position, there is is a, evidence for that, at least literally within the scriptures to say that not, the Quran, but elsewhere, to say that fine, you don’t but then we are in a different context. There was an example in Islamic Relief several years ago, one of my previous managers, where he walked into a meeting room, much bigger than this, it was a conference room, he shook the hands of all the men, then when it came to the woman he did that [gestures placing his hand on his chest the nonphysical handshake that is found in many Muslim communities] and he told me that she was shooting daggers at him through the meeting, she was not impressed and perhaps, understandably so and so, this is how we sort of need to start thinking about these things’ (I 23:11).

In all these examples, related to the UK context, the use of strategic essentialism allows different groups (of docile bodies) to represent themselves within the context of IR as different minority groups with different interests. This enables these different minority groups to act temporarily and to mobilise within different points of resistance and power within the context of IR's internal institutional arrangements to the introduction of gender mainstreaming.

The mechanism of gender mainstreaming: resisting feminism and accommodating gender goals

Gender mainstreaming as a mechanism for the discursive translation of feminist goals of gender equality and women's empowerment highlights the amenability of the goals of feminism, but not the politics of feminism. In this section of the chapter, I will explore how the debate between Islam and feminism surfaces, resurfaces, and may (temporarily) be reconciled in the context of development discourses; through the experiences of the faith actors within IR as they attempted to translate gender and the GJP into their organisational context.

The GJP's accommodation of gender goals over here

Within the GJP, one of the four pillars is 'Institutional arrangements'. In the examples presented so far, I have drawn on how the three interlocutors experienced gender in the context of organisational and institutional arrangements primarily in the context of the UK experience. And whilst the discussions of gender justice within the UK context and the institutional arrangements focused on gender and women's empowerment of female staff in the UK. What the discussion attempted to show was how the untroubled gender

binary model continued to operate within the organisation and how the sex categories of male and female operated within this context.

The untroubled gender binary model revealed various power dynamics and how the Cheshire cat of feminism appeared and disappeared. What was absent from these discussions, was the language of religion. Although the language of religion may have been less pronounced, the third example shows how the language of religion in the construction of gender, as discussed in the previous chapter, formed part of the dividing practices about the normalisation of heterosexual power dynamics of gender relations based on sex categories of male and female.

The GJP's accommodation of gender goals over there

In turning to a different pillar of development and to the level of programmes within the context outside of the UK, the language of religion becomes amplified. In this final section of the chapter, I explore the faith actors' experiences, in the context of the new Orientalists over there, I do this through a description of the GJP and through the experiences of the faith actors, to contextualise the discussion.

THE GENDER JUSTICE POLICY – A DESCRIPTION (OF IR'S GENDER JUSTICE POLICY)

The GJP is thirty-one pages long and has ten sections, some examples of the sections include 'definitions'; 'rationale'; 'our strategic gender commitments'; and 'annexes'. The document also includes some selected quotes from the Quran and hadiths, which are concentrated in the section that discusses their 'faith perspectives informing gender justice policy'. Many of these quotes and

hadiths focus on themes around ‘justice’ and ‘egalitarianism’, specifically within the context of gender relations; race; class, and other axes of discrimination; and, in terms of spiritual rewards for (good) actions, from God, in the hereafter.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Numerous Qu’ranic verses teach us that humans will be ranked according to their ethics, morals and good deeds, the only measures that matter to the Creator, who does not rank one gender above another: *‘Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do’.* [Qur’an 16:97]’ (Taken from the GJP 2015:11)¹⁰⁷

In the above extract, two important narratives stand out, which I touched upon in the analysis of gender, in chapter six.

The first is the gender binary construct of female and male as sex categories, which was left as an untroubled construct within the context of the organisation and is further normalised within the context of the GJP. The second is that in the explanation text, before the Qur’anic verse, the use of ‘Creator’ is a non-gendered term and the aim to dispel the gender hierarchy model is somewhat undone. Within the actual verse from the Quran, while the first sentence would

¹⁰⁶ I have chosen to analyse these verses within the context of the GJP text, and therefore, I will not offer additional commentaries on where these verses fit in within the text of the Quran or opinions and interpretations of these specific verses from within the Islamic intellectual tradition. In part, I have made this decision on the basis of being pragmatic as to how much I can do within the limits of producing a thesis. And, because I am not focusing on the content of the knowledge production but rather the mechanism of knowledge production and how these mechanisms play out.

¹⁰⁷ Italics added to emphasis the difference between the text in the GJP and the specific Quranic verse used by IR to evidence their discourse – I will do this hereafter.

seem to corroborate the argument presented, the following sentences default to the normative male believer as central to the text. This highlights some of the complications of operationalising religious sacred verses within policy discourses and elements of hermeneutical gymnastics that form the tactics of faith actors when mobilising religious knowledge to explore gender/gender justice within the language of religion and through the language of a formal policy document in the language of development.

In the above Quranic quote, the emphasis on the spiritual and material worlds as interconnected echoes the words of the interlocutor in the gender chapter who spoke of: ‘... a deep sense of belief that actually, we are doing this because our Lord has made it incumbent on us to go through, to understand what social justice means and what that construct looks like.’ (I 47:7); suggesting a moral and ethical call to activism. Within the GJP this construct of social justice is fleshed out and the link between social justice and gender justice is made clearer:

‘As a faith-inspired INGO, we have a moral obligation to explore gender issues through an Islamic lens. The following religious imperative gives us clear guidance, which is our basis for this Gender Justice Policy: *‘You who believe, uphold justice and bear witness to God, even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or your close relatives. Whether the person is rich or poor, God can best take care of both. Refrain from following your own desire, so that you can act justly – if you distort or neglect justice, God is fully aware of what you do.’ [Qur’an 4:135]*’ (GJP 2015:6)

The above quote would imply that it is based on being religious subjects (and not faith actors in development) that IR undertakes the exploration of gender, that is to say, as religious subjects, it is 'incumbent on us' to make the connection between the spiritual and the material worlds. Moreover, it is an obligation upon the religious subject to ensure they fulfil this moral obligation. It is then part of the pact between the religious subject with the Creator.

Within the last line of the verse: '*God is fully aware of what you do*' there are echoes of the panoptic process. The mechanism of the panoptic process and the construction of the relationship between the religious subject and the Creator is an important mechanism through which self-disciplinary techniques become ways to regulate individuals and groups.¹⁰⁸

The panopticon and the GJP

In the panopticon, surveillance induces the individual to govern oneself in line with expectations and norms in response to the potential that they are being observed by the allegorical 'guard in the tower' (Foucault, 1975). This can ensure that (good) behaviour is regulated not through constraint but through the sense of awareness of being observed. The observation through the panopticon mechanism can also act by way of altering or correcting behaviour. It can also train individuals to draw up classifications and observe differences among those who are being observed. Within the GJP the notion of the process of observation is presented in the following way:

¹⁰⁸ The question of whether religion inspired the panoptic is outside of the scope of this project – I sense a white rabbit calling – but I will stay on the page.

‘Our staff have witnessed many forms of gender injustice in many cultural, political, geographical, and situational contexts. These include war zones and natural disasters. Our strong local partnerships give us the opportunity to observe communities up close, so we are in a strong position to reflect on lessons learned. These can support us to stand up strongly for gender justice.’ (GJP 2015:16)

It might be possible to read this as implying that IR is upholding justice, the Creator’s justice, thereby placing Muslim faith actors within development within the role of the guard within the panoptic mechanism of power relations. This might suggest a form of surveillance.

What these different quotes further reiterate is the link between the language of religion and the language of development. IR’s insider and outsider positionality as faith actors within development and as religious subjects embolden them, as a: ‘religious imperative’ to act upon that: ‘gives us [them] clear guidance’ and ‘[a]s a faith-inspired INGO, we [they] have a moral obligation’ in which knowledge and observation is connected to faith-literacy, as the following quote from the GJP sets out:

‘One of IR’s roles is as a **duty bearer**. We have a moral and organisational obligation to ensure that our programmes reach out to women, girls, men and boys equitably, according to their needs, interests, aspirations, vulnerabilities, and capacities. We need to reach out to them regardless of their identities and we need to prioritise the most disadvantaged groups. IR also has a responsibility to address the

root causes of the denial of equal and equitable rights (see Definitions) to females across the world. In Muslim communities extreme suffering caused by denial of rights is widespread. Meeting this responsibility is at the core of IR's values, particularly the promotion of social justice ('adl). Gender justice, justice between females and males, is an intrinsic part of this. This paper will help define, in a faith-literate way, how we approach gender justice internally and externally.' (GJP 2015:5 emphasis in the original).

There are several themes here worth drawing attention to in this statement: the orientalist discourse, of othering, and the Muslim difference (Patel 2022) is hard to ignore as the victim narrative is also introduced: 'In Muslim communities extreme suffering caused by denial of rights is widespread'. The Muslim woman as the victim is then further normalised in the line: 'denial of equal and equitable rights...to females across the world'. Next, the gender binary, both as the normative site of operationalisation at IR is further entrenched in the line: 'women, girls, men and boys equitably' along with the formula of the gender hierarchical dynamic of relations of power within a binary construct: 'Gender justice, justice between females and males'.

Thus, despite earlier having tried to argue that the Creator does not operate on a hierarchical model they then fall back on this default construction. What is more, despite this hierarchical model appearing to be repeated within the Qur'anic quotes, the thematic areas of FGM/C, domestic violence and early marriage focus on women. And their programmatic themes seem not to focus on gender justice between females and males. Finally, the language of

development in which development happens ‘over there’ (Elledge 2019) is heard in the line: ‘We need to reach out to them’ then draws on the moral obligation argument, while the panopticon: ‘how we approach gender justice internally and externally’, becomes a form of disciplinary technique.

What these narratives serve is the normative Us in which the other is viewed as victims. That is to say, while the narratives in the GJP do highlight the real-world inequalities, what is absent is any sense of resistance or free agency on the part of females across the world or by any subaltern to development programmes from outsiders. Whereas in the following two quotes, different forms of power/resistance play out in interesting ways. In the first example, the interlocutor through the panoptic gaze offers many examples of how resistance and agency play out on the part of different females across the world. It also highlights the disciplinary techniques of domination that play out. What is notable is how feminised narratives around female and male gender roles are repeated by development initiatives and sometimes disturbed by the other over there:

‘I evaluated a project several years ago...there were a whole load of activities when it came to women it was just sewing clothes, and the only reason that was put in was because someone thought, okay, we need to give the women something, what are we going to do, yeah, let’s just give them some tailoring training...there are so many other things that could have been done, this was one of the things that I have picked up on...making sure that not just in the design of the project, then in the implementation...going back to Pakistan early this year and this was a

positive. It was a major impact where the women were very, very practically involved in the project from start to finish. I think our office was insistent, despite cultural obligations from people, so no, the women are going to be involved in this, I don't care what you say, if you don't want this, we will leave and so, and they involved them and the impact was incredible, especially from the women...the women insisted they were going to come [to the focus group meeting held by IR evaluation team] and they turned up en masse and...they outshouted the men actually...the feedback they were giving and sort of they were so thankful for the projects and how it has personally improved, them, their lives as well in a kind of way...despite objections...it's a common thing in development, you know...that sort of helping men generally the money sort of gets wasted, if you help women, especially when she has responsibility for the children, as well, it is much more effective and that is one of the things that we always try to do. The women are always at the top of the list when it comes to sort of a needs assessment, as well...Another example, I was telling you about where the women were...really impactful, in one village that worked...in a village ten minutes away where we went, and again it was the same project, it didn't work at all...that was because the villagers themselves, the village chief weren't as dynamic as the one over there. Something as simple as the village chief and how dynamic they are...how much they buy into it can make a complete difference on a project' (I 23:13-14)

In the second quote, a different interlocutor reflects on an encounter with both male and female colleagues within the field context. In which the new orientalist is confronted by different forms of resistance insider-outsider resistance. The topic is FGM/C:

‘Now I may come across quite direct, but in that setting, he, he was clearly upset, but he was making us realise that maybe the approach here should be a different way. So I altered my session...It’s not a debate, it’s not me against you, I want to listen and hear from you...I sat back and allowed them the space of learning from each other. So, what was very clear was the men that were saying this should happen, and it was the women that were saying that, why should we have it done, to what purpose, and where does it say in Islam and they started having this dialogue, which at times got a little heated...well as men you have not had this done to you, so why do you have the right to tell me that I should have FGM/C done...We go through the process...It’s just a violation of her rights because it feeds your needs and your understanding of control...’ (I 27:7)

In both these quotes what becomes clear is that cookie-cutter approaches to development do not work and that even though IR silence feminism within their context, the language of feminism and different forms of resistance operate within complex power dynamics in the experiences of the examples that they narrate. What is also woven into these narratives are the cultural norms argument that the new orientalists offered in terms of the previous chapter, and which is found in the GJP. What is important is to recognise that these

reflections are based on the interlocutors' frames of reference and positions of privilege.

Untroubling the gender binary and retrieving marginal knowledge

In the gender chapter, one of the key themes was the untroubling of the gender binary model at IR, in that, there had been a deliberate decision to use the normative gender binary model based on sex categories of male and female. In untroubling gender, IR located itself firmly into the normative Islamic intellectual tradition of Islam wherein heterosexual (hierarchical) gender dynamics were normalised. The heterosexual hierarchical gender dynamics of relations of power is the site within which debates on gender and gender justice have played out, in both historical and contemporary discourses on gender justice within the discursive tradition of Islam (Chaudhry 2013, Bauer 2015, Lamrabet 2018).

As a consequence of untroubling the gender binary the faith actors at IR were faced with the challenge of trying to work-in and work-out the language of religion from within the debates on gender justice within the normative Islamic intellectual tradition. Within this tradition, heterosexual and hierarchical dynamics of gender relations are normalised.

That is to say, the model of gender justice that is normalised within the normative Islamic intellectual tradition is generally based on hierarchical (heteronormative/sexual) dynamics of gender relations. In contemporary and historical debates within Islam, the hierarchical dynamics of gender relations have been a site of contestation (Mernissi 1991, Ahmed 1992, Abugideiri 2010 , Sayeed 2013 , Lamrabet 2016, Lamrabet 2018, Mubarak 2022), in which, both

classical (and throughout different periods of modernity) male ways of knowing gender justice (Bauer 2009, Bauer 2015, Mubarak 2020, Mubarak 2022) and contemporary (and historical periods) female ways of knowing gender justice (Wadud 1999, Sayeed 2013, Wadud 2013, Wadud 2021).

Contemporary debates on gender justice (within Islam and as part of the Muslim question), including the generation and production of knowledge offered by Islamic feminists, might be framed as counter-hegemonic arguments towards classical/historical debates of gender justice and on issues of gender relations between the sex categories of male and female. However, these arguments have often focused on one dynamic of power relations, namely patriarchal (as discussed in the genealogy chapters two and three). In the case of IR, the normalisation of the gender hierarchy model in the GJP continues to and may even maintain the patriarchal dynamic of gender relations that is offered as an explanatory argument by feminists. At IR, the GJP does not explain why gender injustice is over there. This allows them to sidestep any connection to feminism, even to contemporary debates within Islam.

The knowledge generation and production of Islamic feminists might even be classed as indigenous knowledge through which to decolonise the Islamic intellectual tradition – by which to reclaim the voice of the Subaltern (Spivak 1988). It might be possible to suggest that Islamic feminists offer a marginalised knowledge production, a faith-literacy project through which to operationalise gender/gender justice, through the retrieval of buried knowledge. Despite IR's decision to not include the new debates offered by contemporary Islamic feminists, IR does, however, employ similar tactics, in the use of the retrieval of

buried knowledge. In the genealogy chapters, I showed how feminists uncovered hidden, silenced, buried knowledge to tell different feminist stories of Islam's historical past. In the GJP, IR also tell stories differently, using the concept of Muslim male allies, a theme that appeared in the gender chapter.

The retrieval of the buried knowledge: The making of Muslim male allies – through the example of the Prophet in the GJP

In the next quote, the gender binary model is further located as the site of focus and the untroubled hierarchical dynamics of gender relations are identified.

Here, IR draws on and defines the concept of wilayah¹⁰⁹ – which is a contested concept within the Islamic intellectual tradition and one that Islamic feminists, who explore issues of gender justice, have generated knowledge on (Wadud 1999, Mir-Hosseini, Al-Sharmani et al. 2015, Ayubi 2019 , Mubarak 2022). For IR, they articulate it as 'protection' and as 'public responsibility' which within the GJP enables them to link this to the language of development and the language of religion. The use of the term 'agents of change' is then part of the development discourse of leading change (Khalaf-Elledge 2021:129), which I discussed in the section on the faith-literacy project at IR.

'The relationships between women and men are established on the concept of wilayah which in principle means protecting one another.

Wilayah also assumes that public responsibility falls on both females and males to do good and stop harm, to be agents of change: *'The believers,*

¹⁰⁹ I will not be discussing this concept as it is not a key concept within this project (for further discussions on this the authors cited in the main body provide various readings of this within the discourse of gender justice from an Islamic feminist perspective)

both men and women, support each other; they order what is right and forbid what is wrong; they keep up the prayer and pay the prescribed alms; they obey God and His Messenger. God will give His mercy to such people: God is almighty and wise'. [Qur'an 9:71] (GJP:13)

There are also Quranic quotes and hadith quotes on 'poverty' alleviation and on dealing fairly with those who may otherwise be oppressed due to their social status, amongst those groups are women and orphans. These are major themes within the Quran. That is to say, while these self-selected quotes may fit into the organisational themes and the themes being expressed in the GJP, these quotes have a concomitant relationship to central themes expressed within the Quran.

'The Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) was particularly concerned about orphans and women, who in pre-Islamic Arabia were most afflicted by inequalities of the system at the time, as in the following hadith: Abu Shuraih Khuwailid bin 'Amr Al-Khuzai reported: *'The Prophet said, 'O Allah, I declare inviolable the rights of two [physically] weak ones: the orphans and women.'* [An-Nasa'i Riyadh al Saliheen, Chapter 33, 270] All the members of the growing Muslim community were treated as equal, with respect, kindness and humility, and women were provided with protection. Virtues encouraged in the time of the Prophet (PBUH) included making peace between people, benevolent treatment towards orphans, and vulnerable and poor people. Good treatment of neighbours, sharing food and goods, kind treatment of parents, loving each other for the sake of God, fulfilling promises, politeness, meeting people with a

smiling countenance, dignity and tranquillity were all strongly recommended, while arrogance, persecution, aggression, and pre-judging people were strongly discouraged. Even though the rights of women and the vulnerable were restored under the Prophet's leadership, in line with Qur'anic directives, he was still concerned that ignorant attitudes and behaviour could come back and lead to the violation of women's rights after his death. His very last pilgrimage sermon emphasises the importance of justice between husbands and wives, reminding men and women of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities in their relationship, and the fact that they bear responsibility before God for harmony in marriage. He equated the violation of women's marital rights to a breach of the covenant with God. To find out more regarding Muslim women in history please refer to annex 3. 1' (GJP 2015:14)

The retrieval of the past and the exemplar of the Prophet's good conduct and behaviour offer another panoptic mechanism, and the notion of the Muslim difference (Patel 2022). There is an assumption in this narrative that there is an essence and authenticity within the past that needs to be retrieved. On the one hand, this may be read as a form of essentialism. On the other hand, it may be read as being a romanticised, even an exoticized imaginary of a perfect past (Kugle 2003). This adds to the mythology of the period that women's rights in the perfect past have been 'lost' and that this essence needs to be returned to a theme that was present within the gender chapter, where the interlocutor talked about Islam giving rights to women, 1400 years ago.

That is to say, this can be viewed as a form of Orientalism and more so a re-Orientalism. The use of a male ally as the voice of gender and for women's rights and defender of women's rights is then a powerful narrative that many Muslims would not challenge. In this way, the Islamic history is discursively produced through the narrative of gender and women's rights through the embodied practice of the Prophet.

What is worth mentioning is that the tone of the 'faith perspectives informing gender-justice policy' stands out from most of the other sections, within the GJP, due to the generous use of references to religious and spiritual narratives and direct verses from the Quran. Whilst most of the other sections, in the GJP for example the 'definitions' section reads like a glossary of gender and development terms – similar to any textbook on the topic of development and gender or Islam and gender.

The sections on 'scope' and 'rationale' and context and subsequent sections that deal with their 'policy statement', their 'strategic gender commitments, and procedure and guidelines', also read like a development technical manual. That is to say, the language of development is much stronger in those sections. The technical language of development within the GJP is similar to secular development narratives. Simply put, whilst the language of religion and the language of development are (re-)presented in the GJP, they are separate scripts. I would suggest that this is similar to feminism and development (Piálek 2008).

In the examples offered by the interlocutors within this final section of the chapter, and in reading the GJP through the lens of gender mainstreaming and Foucault's framing of power as capillary-like. I drew attention to how the panoptic process and the enforced collaboration with gender played out in the field. At the external level, of programmes, within the field, the new Orientalists carried out assessments, they enforced compliance with gender projects, which led to the continuation or loss of support, and gathered knowledge on the other. In many ways, the faith actors mimicked the same strategies as dominant development discourses.

Similar to the faith actor's acts of resistance to the enforced collaboration, the new Orientalists faced resistance. In this way, gender (in development) may have been a reframing of colonial feminism, delivered through Muslim faith actors during the turn to religion. Whereby, the use of religion to change development scripts to sacred scripts through the development narrative of leading change to the Other, resulted in Muslim faith actors, as the new Orientalists, employing Orientalist strategies, through the process of re-Orientalism.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I explored how dividing practices have shaped the process of IR's journey into developing a GJP and how the discourse of gender justice is to be understood within the context of the discursive tradition of Islam. I attempted to draw out the various sites of power and resistance. In exploring the faith actors experiences, I drew parallels with the experiences of other marginal development actors, such as feminist policy actors, who having been invited

into the centre of development had offered feminist ways of thinking. The accommodation to religious, and more specifically Islamic ways of thinking, on gender may have been a democratizing and broadening of development ideas and practices within mainstream development discourses. It might even hint at a corrective from within development discourse. More optimistically it can even be read as a decolonising of development.

However, the lack of a two-way learning process meant that the reclassification of the other, in this case, faith actors in development, in the West by donor agencies in the normative discourses of development through the turn to religion and offshoring of the faith literacy project, meant that IR was now part of the technologies of generating and disseminating 'knowledge' on how to infuse gender and infuse religion into existing development discourses.

This knowledge generation by the other (faith actors in development organisations located in the west), is the means through which this other (these faith actors who are living as communities of Muslims in diaspora and are, therefore, constructing their own subjectivities in relation to this location), now come to construct themselves as the Other (within different and multiple locations and sites of contestations). And, then through this knowledge, they come to construct another 'other' (their beneficiaries, Muslims over there), who may be constructed as different to them. In other words, the other now comes to recognise themselves as subjects and objects of their own knowledge. What I attempted to understand was how various 'forms and techniques of power' (Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007:25) may have been lurking underneath IR's experience as faith actors in the context of development, and their specific

experience of developing a gender justice policy within the context of the turn to religion discourse within development.

In taking a Foucauldian lens, what I tried to draw out was the complex linkages between how the mechanistic and technocratic process of development professional knowledge had come to discipline the 'other' when they become accommodated and appropriated into existing ways of organising and doing gender and development within the business of development.

I suggested, this normalisation resulted in those who were once classified and divided as the 'other' to then engage in dividing practices, in which they were now constructing, while participating, within multiple 'others'. In the case of faith actors within development, who operated within development organisations in the west, such as IR, they now become 'othered' in relation to a different 'other' with whom they may have previously been part of a universal homogenous other and who were once constructed in a particular way. For example, through a particular episteme and discourse, namely Orientalism.

8. CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This research project sought to contribute to the broader discourses on religion and development, offering a more complicated and nuanced reading of the 'turn to religion' era in the wake of the post-9/11 context. According to Emma Tomalin (2020), there were insufficient studies in the area of (faith) actor-orientated experiences of the turn to religion. In this period, faith actor-orientated approaches to gender and gender justice and gender mainstreaming represented a further gap in the literature. As such, this project sought to respond to Tomalin's call for more research in this area and has in part contributed to filling this gap.

By exploring the experiences of these faith actors, the study contributes to the under-researched area of faith actor-oriented approaches to the turn to religion, particularly within the intersection of gender and development. Moreover, this study looks to extend the scholarly conversation by examining how these actors navigated the contested terrain of secular (gender) and religious (gender) discourses in development.

Moreover, Muslim faith actors (in development and located in the Global North) constitute new actors in diasporic debates and discourses on gender, women, and Islam. In addition to the new (faith actors in development), another group of diasporic actors simultaneously entered into the conversation around contemporary constructions of gender and gender justice. Namely, Muslim and/or Islamic feminists. The rise in contemporary diasporic research and new

knowledge and scholarship on gender and gender justice in Islam, feminist and women's hermeneutical re-readings of the sacred text, and Muslim women's activism on issues of religious authority, religious rituals, gender and social practices within Islam, introduced new diasporic actors into the debates and discourses on gender/women and Islam (Wadud 1999, Hammer 2012, Chaudhry 2013, Hidayatullah 2014, Mir-Hosseini, Al-Sharmani et al. 2015, Chaudhry 2021, Mir-Hosseini 2022).

Contemporary new diasporic actors (both Muslim faith actors in development and Muslim/Islamic feminists) engagement with Islamic discourses on the constructions of gender and gender justice within the Islamic intellectual tradition is where I set out to enter into the conversation on how contemporary constructions of gender and gender justice may compete, converge, and come into conflict, when feminist, Islamic, and development discourses share the same space.

Initially, the research project sought to examine how a faith-inspired approach to gender mainstreaming might offer a more inclusive and responsive development policy and practice of gender mainstreaming within International Development. With that aim, this project focused on the experiences of Muslim faith actors within a UK-based Muslim FBO as they incorporated a formal introduction of gender, gender justice, and a Gender Justice Policy into the context of their organisation, during the turn to religion period in International Development. Thereby adding to the newly emerging sub-field of religion and development (RaD).

However, as detailed in Chapter Five, the various challenges and setbacks during the research process resulted in various iterations. The thesis, as presented, is then a research project that focuses on understanding how Muslim faith actors within a UK-based Muslim faith-based international development organisation, namely Islamic Relief (IR), mobilised religious knowledge to develop faith literacy on gender and to produce a gender justice policy, during the turn to religion era.

In exploring the agentic experiences of new actors - namely religious subjects/faith actors within a UK Muslim FBO in development - this case undertook an ascending analysis of power, to consider how the mechanisms of knowledge/power and resistance played out within the 'turn to religion' period (Tomalin 2013, Tomalin 2020).

In doing so I set out to answer the following questions:

- How have Muslim UK development faith actors operationalised religious knowledge for gender/gender justice?
- What is the relationship between the operationalisation of this religious knowledge and (re)orientalism?
- In what ways have debates between feminism and Islam surfaced, resurfaced, and been (temporarily) reconciled?

In capturing the lived experiences of faith actors in development during the turn to religion period, this study offers a unique perspective of how this group of actors had engaged in gender advocacy within a Muslim faith-based international development organisation. Moreover, it offers insight into the

tactics, strategies, and manoeuvres that these actors employed to navigate a period of evolving narratives and negotiate the gender-religion-development nexus within the geopolitical terrain of the (post) War On Terror period.

This research study hones in on the lived experiences of Muslim faith actors, both male and female, of Muslim heritage, in the UK, who were engaged in gender advocacy work during the turn to religion and post-War On Terror period. The lived experiences of Muslim faith actors within development during this period have been under-researched within international development.

This study contributes to filling this gap by drawing on the experiences of these underrepresented, marginal, actors in development, during this time, and who were part of shifting scripts within development. The lived experiences of faith actors' approaches to undertaking gender and development, as faith development actors, working within the margins of development, in a Muslim faith-based organisation, in the context of the UK, represents another contribution. This study undertook a micro-level analysis of power, knowledge, and resistance. In doing so, I recover the subaltern experiences, voices, and agency, of marginal actors during a period of changing narratives within the development sector and geopolitics that impacted Muslim development agencies, like IR.

In this study, I use the lens of gender, to explore how these actors resist different dominant discourses whilst engaged in organisational change around gender advocacy within the context of wider development, feminist, and even at times, Islamic discourses. Thereby revealing how the nexus of different

discourses (Islamic, development, and feminist) compete, converge, and come into conflict, and whether shifting dominant development scripts (around gender and religion) from secular to sacred scripts (Tomalin 2020) are possible. In this case study, the micro-level analysis of the relationship between power and knowledge further aimed to understand how Muslim faith actors approached gender and development through their mobilisation of religious knowledge to frame gender advocacy resulting in the development of the organisation's Gender Justice Policy.

Here I focused on how the faith-literacy project, undertaken at IR, as part of international development donor conditions for funding, acted as a form of developing knowledge on the other, a strategy familiar to Orientalist strategies. Whilst this project was not framed within or by Orientalism, in the early iteration of the study, as the focus changed in the study, towards the experiences of IR and the faith actor-oriented approaches to the turn to religion, my engagement with the data began to reveal how (re)orientalism surfaced within the case study. Moreover, how the intersection between gender, religion, and (re)orientalism in development, during the turn to religion era, resurfaced historical contestations, debates, and discourses, both around contemporary constructions of gender and gender justice within Muslim contexts and Western knowledge production and discourses during this period.

GENEALOGY AND THE TRACING OF DOMINANT DISCOURSES

I began to answer these questions in chapters two and three by adopting a Foucauldian genealogical approach to examine the debates and discourses on gender/women and Islam to understand how present ideas around the

construction of gender and gender justice had been the products of the past (Foucault 1978, Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007, Crosby 2012, Foucault 2016, McCann and Monaghan 2019).

In chapters two and three, I traced the rise of subaltern (Muslim and/ both feminist) women's voices. I examined how dominant discourses were shaped through the themes of the woman question, patriarchy, and the language of feminism; and, how dominant discourses like the miserable, victim, Muslimwoman (Cooke 2008) trope were fashioned through the unhistorical other of women in colonial discourses, most powerfully within orientalist discourses (Said 1978). What is more, the trope of the victim Muslim woman has continued to shape resistance, activism, and scholarship on topics and practices within academia, geopolitical, and development discourses about Muslim women. Consequently, the Muslim Other woman is collectively generated, essentialised, and often framed as 'over there', and lacking in agency.

That is to say, the construction of the discourse on the Muslim woman is viewed as static within cultural ideas and practices that are discursively produced based on the assumption that these constructions are naturalised. For example, in chapters two and three, in examining diasporic Islamic feminists' theological engagements with the woman question and the Muslim question. Arguments were framed as either apologetic arguments of Islam's founding texts or the hermeneutical reframing on gender injustice and gender practices considered harmful to Muslim women, which were viewed as the product of historical male bias. Moreover, patriarchy was an explanatory argument for the silencing of

women within this knowledge production within the Islamic intellectual tradition. However, the language of feminism, as it did in this case, had to compete, converge, and even come into conflict within these debates and discourses, either appearing or disappearing like the Cheshire Cat of feminism.

That is to say, these debates and discourses were often shaped by binary formulations and mechanisms of dividing practices, wherein the patriarchal argument was viewed as a dominant power and (women's) resistance was, therefore, shaped within this construction as oppositional. The Muslim woman (as the victim) is constructed based on the Muslim man (as the oppressor), invoking an Orientalist discourse (Said 1978) explored throughout this thesis.

By tracing the ebbs and flows of gendered narratives in endogenous and exogenous discourses related to women and gender in Islam, the early sections of this thesis honed in on question three above. This genealogy demonstrates the pernicious, persistent, and political ways in which gender has been operationalised by faith and other actors at different times, and how my case study FBO is itself embedded within these discursive matrices.

DISCURSIVE OPERATIONS, KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION, AND COLLECTIVELY GENERATING THE OTHER.

Thus, in chapters two and three, having traced colonial, postcolonial, and contemporary diasporic Muslim and Islamic women's and feminist discourses on women/gender and Islam, in chapter four I offered a detailed discussion of the theoretical and conceptual tools I drew on to examine the case. Here I explored the mechanisms of Othering.

First drawing on Foucault, I examined discussions on the relationship between knowledge/power and resistance (Feder 2014), wherein, I explored how Foucault (1972), who proposed that the intimacy between the connection of knowledge/power could result in knowledge being used to oppress (Etherington 2004:27) and that this power/knowledge could also shape the possibility of activism and resistance (Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007, Anderson and Patterson 2017). I also explored the Foucauldian perspective that institutions that generate (scientific) knowledge are a source of normalising power.

Next, in wanting to explore how institutions that generate knowledge might become a source of normalising power and shape resistance, I turned to the construction of Orientalism. Edward Said (1978) offered a typology through which he argued that Orientalism was a discourse. The discourse of Orientalism had been shaped within academic institutions and 'Western institutional' ways of knowing, which produced knowledge on the other through the mechanisms of constructing an Occidental (European Self) as the opposite of an Oriental (East, Other, Muslim) (Wisker 2006:202).

Said (1978) argued that invariably, European science and logic were utilised to create the Other (Oriental) and construct them as deviant, exotic, strange, and even dangerous (Said 1978, Wisker 2006, Foucault 2016). These 'dividing practices' (Engstrand and Enberg 2020), resulted in the creation of geographical distinctions based on binary constructions, such as the East (i.e. the Muslim World) and the West (European) based on unequal pairs and in 'hierarchies of value' (Wisker 2006:202).

In this way, Said (1978), drawing on Foucault and Gramsci articulated that history, culture, politics, and geography are linked in the construction of discourses and in reproducing power formulations (Wisker 2006:202). Said (1978), through exposing the mechanisms of Orientalism, thereby built upon Foucault's argument that dominant groups within society can use force relations and 'knowledgeable beliefs' (Wisker 2006:177), to control and discipline those who are discursively produced within the discourse and render them silent. This conceptual insight paved the way in the thesis to explore my second research question, namely the relationship between religious knowledge and (re)orientalism.

TROUBLING BINARIES

In articulating how colonialist discourses were constructed based on a system of practices and values built upon binary divisions, Said (1978) revealed how colonial practices had been constructed on the foundation of oppositional and hierarchical categories of Self and Other. From a position of dominance, the Other can be regulated or rendered 'docile' (Foucault 2016) by othering discourses, leaving them silenced (Wisker 2006:177).

Discourses constructing the 'Other' as mad, bad, and abnormal, have become the dominant mechanisms/formulation of 'otherising', thereby re-producing power formulations that perpetuate marginalisation and discrimination (Wisker 2006:201). It is through these discursive operations (Crosby 2012) that the construction of how knowledge is produced on the Other as based on Eurocentric scientific logic/knowledge is made legitimate based on the unthinking knowledge of the colonial subject as a 'non-knowledge producer'

(Bhambra, Gebrial et al. 2018:234). Additionally, 'negative knowledge' which is unknown knowledge that may be considered dangerous and insignificant to actors (Cetina 1999, Bhambra, Gebrial et al. 2018:234), may be silenced, hidden, or buried (knowledge).

Feminist storytelling (Hemmings 2011:16), reminds us of the political and ethical dilemmas that are raised in uncovering hidden, buried, silenced knowledges that offer diverse/new actors the possibilities and some of the pitfalls in trying to tell stories differently and 'different stories' of the past that may shape contemporary constructions of gender and gender justice.

Finally, drawing on the magpie approach (as outlined in chapter four), this research set out to identify how these discourses/knowledge/power mechanisms were presented through the UK Muslim faith actors' experiences. I applied Said's (1978) concept of Orientalism to understand how these mechanisms played out within this case. Here I suggested that the UK Muslim faith actors' experiences be viewed as a form of repeating re-orientalism (Lau and Mendes 2011), and demonstrated how they engaged with the normalising power strategies, discussed in this section, such as Othering and the use of 'dividing practices'.

I also drew on postcolonial (feminist) writer Gayatri Spivak (1988), especially her concept of 'epistemic violence', and queer (feminist) theorist Judith Butler (1990), to complicate the binaries and explore how previously silenced voices uncovered buried knowledge to mobilise religious knowledge in contemporary constructions of gender and gender justice. In exploring the construction of

gender, I examined to what extent ‘violent hierarchies’ (Beasley 1999) and multiple binary formulations through ‘dividing practices’ (Mamdani 2002, Topolski 2018, Engstrand and Enberg 2020), continued to shape dominant discourses, untroubled gender, and ultimately how these faith actors resisted, responded, and reacted to western feminist storytelling on the hegemony of gender equality (Hemmings 2011).

The introduction and application of the concept of re-orientalism in investigating IR’s development discourse marks a contribution to the scholarship. In addition, using Foucault and including feminist queer theories to trouble binaries, including the gender binary construction, within this case has not been attempted before. This project contributes to the field of identifying and troubling the snares of epistemic violence, coloniality, and decolonising epistemology within development discourses and constructions of gender and gender justice (in Islamic and feminist scholarship and activism).

SUBALTERN ACTIVISM AND RESISTANCE: THE AGENTIC EXPERIENCES OF ACTOR-ORIENTED APPROACHES

I set out to detail how dominant discourses repeated, resisted, and re-orientalised ‘Othering’ and how these discourses were made, remade, and/or were unmade within the context of the case. I focused on the agentic experiences of UK Muslim faith actors in development at Islamic Relief. Seen through the agentic experiences of the Muslim faith actors, the project offered a micro-level analysis of local relations of force (Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007, Lynch 2014), to understand how norms and social practices operated at macro-levels of discourses and hegemonies.

In reflecting on the 'turn to religion' period, this project drew on Foucault's conceptualisation of power as a 'capillary-like network' to explore the 'workings of power from below'. In undertaking an ascending analysis of power, I examined how the mechanisms of knowledge production played out from the viewpoint of the ruled and not of the ruler (Markula-Denison and Pringle 2007:36).

In this way, this project contributes to the literature on faith actor-oriented approaches to the turn to religion. This is because it illustrated how faith actors themselves not only encountered but how they attempted to shape development discourses and frameworks. An actor-orientated approach highlighted how subaltern resistance and activism (Anderson and Patterson 2017:2) played out in different contexts. In focusing on actor-orientated analysis, I drew particular attention to agency, the question of lived experiences, issues of power and knowledge, and developing 'theory from below' (Long 2003:4).

Moreover, my research showed how they were viewed as brokers to translate development discourses and frameworks into applicable formats, strategically employing them (Tomalin 2020:1) and at other times resisting them.

By examining UK Muslim faith actors' experiences of the turn to religion through the faith-literacy project, as initiated by donor agencies, I argued that the disciplinary techniques of producing knowledge, in which the faith actors in development mobilised and operationalised religious knowledge, was a source of normalising power.

In chapters six and seven, I drew on the primary data from the interviews with the faith actors. I explored how the concept of gender and gender justice was constructed and operationalized within the case study organisation, thereby paying particular attention to the first research question, as outlined above. Here, I argued that gender remained untroubled in that the heteronormative gender binary model continued to reproduce hierarchical gender power dynamics, despite attempts to use the language of religion to provide new narratives from within the discursive tradition of Islam (Asad 1996).

Ultimately in organising around the category of 'woman' the faith actors produced homogenising and fixed meanings around the category of woman, this worked to reproduce the miserable, victim, Muslimwoman (Cooke 2007) trope. In focusing on 'the woman question' (Crosby 2012), the organisation repeated heteronormative gender binary dynamics of power relations.

Furthermore, in resisting (all forms of) feminism there was another closure to working-in or working-out (Ahmed 2015) alternative discourses. Invariably, doing so resulted in evoking Orientalist discourses and setting up the 'culture' argument of the other as the cause of gender harmful practices, thereby re-orientalising themselves as the Other. Culture in this case was not a euphemism for patriarchy, rather, I argued that it was a re-evoking of the Orientalist mechanism of othering and was a form of re-orientalism, by the new Orientalists in development.

In other words, I argued that there was a tendency for the case organisation to repeat and reproduce dominant development discourses (and the dark side of

modernity theory) to construct the culture of the Other as a hindrance to development (Mignolo 2011, Tomalin 2013). However, attempts to trouble these discursively produced development constructions through shifting scripts within the turn to religion context in this case, from secular development scripts to religious (sacred) scripts exposed how orientalism remained unfinished within development.

ORIENTALISM, THE MUSLIM QUESTION, AND RE-ORIENTALISM

In this thesis, I explored the connection between Orientalism, the Muslim question including Muslim Orientalism (Hammer 2012) and the Muslim difference (Patel 2022), and Re-Orientalism (Lau 2009). I attempted to extend Said's (1978) Orientalism, by drawing on the concept of the New Orientalist, I applied this to the Muslim faith actors in development, in this case. To the best of my knowledge, there are no studies that apply re-orientalism to Muslim faith actors in development. As such, this thesis through this application, makes use of Said's theory of Orientalism in useful and novel ways.

I drew on the Muslim question which I inverted and explored from within the discourse of the Islamic Tradition, rather than from the discourse of Orientalism. Next, I introduced the concept of Re-Orientalism to highlight how Orientalism within development remains unfinished. Finally, I argued that during the turn to religion era, donor agencies' partnerships (with FBOs) used gender (mainstreaming and the production of gender justice policies) as a mechanism of disciplinary power, through enforced collaboration and compliance with gender mainstreaming strategies.

The use of gender as a form of disciplinary power, I argued was a reframing of colonial feminism, as discussed by Ahmed (1992). In this way, the silencing and resistance to the language of feminism, by the new Orientalists, would suggest that the new Orientalists internalised the self-disciplinary techniques (within dominant development discourses). This institutional form of disciplinary power wherein the new Orientalists engaged in the production of knowledge (religious/faith literacy on gender) saw the mechanisms of othering (re)produced in this new site, whereby the new Orientalists repeated (re)Orientalist discourses on the other and simultaneously became 'othered'.

DEVELOPMENT, GENDER, AND (RE) ORIENTALISM

Like Spivak (1988), who extended the concept of the subaltern to include the unheard voices of Indian women, I also looked to include the unheard, and, more significantly, the new voices in development (Muslim faith actors, both male and female, in Western-based FBOs during the turn to religion era). In answering the call to explore faith actor-orientated approaches to the turn to religion era, I have contributed to meeting the gap in the literature of a group that had been excluded in the subfield of religion and development (RaD).

In extending the concept of the New Orientalist to Muslim faith actors in development in chapters six and seven I turned to the various thinking tools, I outlined in chapter four. Here, I attempted to complicate the Orientalist mechanism of othering, first, by showing how the new Orientalists, undertook the role of the native informant (in development) during the turn to religion era as they entered into new partnerships with dominant development donors.

Then, I argued that the faith literacy project (where donor agencies offshored religious literacy to faith actors/FBOs) acted as the mechanism through which faith actors produced (new) knowledge on the 'other'. Here the faith actors (new Orientalists) engaged in (re) Orientalist strategies of knowledge production (dividing practices, othering) using the language of religion and the language of development whilst silencing the language of feminism.

I suggested that the new Orientalists (Muslim faith actors in development) in making knowledge on the 'Oriental' (the Muslim other who lives in the Orient), during the turn to religion era were expected to act as brokers between the development secular script and make a sacred (religious) script that would fit into the business of development. In this way, the new Orientalist was under the surveillance of the dominant development discourses, the 'ruling power', who through the mechanism of new partnerships with donor agencies were able to exercise techniques of domination and the dynamics of power to ensure compliance with dominant development discourses. Here the new Orientalists (under development surveillance) served as docile bodies in the utility of the business of development. In this way, the new Orientalists maintained dominant binary formulas including the gender binary model.

I argued that this highlighted the strategic utility of the gender binary model to development discourses in that the gender binary model offers a fixed normative value due to the perceived 'stability' of the formula. Making it operationalizable in the business of development. However, untroubling the gender binary model led to the closure of other possibilities, thereby suggesting

that gender in development continued to be an instrumental goal under the shadow of (re) orientalism in this case.

By arguing that gender (mainstreaming in development) acted as a form of enforced collaboration and compliance within the newly formed partnerships (between donor agencies and FBOs) I presented the possibility of gender (in development) being considered as the reframing of colonial feminism (in development).

SHIFTING SCRIPTS FROM ORIENTALIST TO RE-ORIENTALIST

As this case attempted to highlight, shifting scripts from secular development to (sacred) religious scripts resulted in epistemic violence and othering. Muslim faith actors/religious subjects within diasporic contexts who engaged in the mobilisation of religious knowledge production on contemporary constructions of gender and gender justice may have to engage in strategies that converge, tactics that come into conflict, and manoeuvres that compete with different dominant (feminist, Islamic, and development) discourses.

In that, shifting scripts whether from within the Islamic intellectual tradition, feminist tradition, or dominant discourses within development (intellectual tradition) does not result in an epistemological break. In part that is because shifting scripts are part of the structural mechanisms of histories of discourses based on knowledge/power and are forms of resistance to a complex web of power dynamics. Indeed, the formulations of historical colonialist knowledge production and colonialist practices of violent hierarchies, for example, colonial

feminism (Ahmed 1992), have significantly shaped Eurocentric discourses around the Muslim question.

As suggested in this project, UK Muslim development faith actors, similar to contemporary diasporic Muslim/Islamic feminist debates on gender and gender justice, tactically returned to the past to uncover hidden, buried, silenced voices, and histories in an attempt to shift scripts. However, in doing so, they imprinted the formulation of dividing practices and the practice of othering and repeated the orientalist's cultural argument.

The use of telling stories differently, on the one hand, offered a romantic notion of the past, even an exotic idealisation. On the other hand, it suggested that the present (traditional) culture of the other was dangerous. Thus, whether the explanatory argument is patriarchy or culture the shifting of the script is less from a development secular to (sacred) religious and more from an orientalist to a re-orientalist script.

THE MUSLIM QUESTION: SHIFTING SCRIPTS WITHIN THE DISCURSIVE TRADITION OF ISLAM.

In attempting to shift scripts on constructions of gender and gender justice from within the discursive tradition of Islam, faith actors worked from within the normative construction of gender relations as hierarchical and the gender binary model as historically naturalised (Bauer 2015). In this way, instead of complicating the binaries or engaging with the discourses/knowledge production directly to problematise them, they continued within the discursive tradition of seeking gender justice from within contemporary discourses of gender/gender justice (within Islam).

Additionally, the decision to resist feminism and situate the mobilisation of knowledge from the dominant discourse of Islam of the East as Archive (Grewal 2014), resulted in suggestions that the knowledge production of the Islamic intellectual tradition (of the past) remained somewhat ossified, as does the other, over there. And whilst they attempted to draw on silenced, hidden knowledge from the Islamic past to tell (feminist) stories differently (a shared/similar strategy used by Islamic/Muslim/post-colonialist feminists), nonetheless, the binary gender model continued to remain untroubled.

REFLEXIVITY AND THE EMBODIED RESEARCHER: USING OURSELVES IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS IN MUSLIM-ON-MUSLIM RESEARCH.

Another contribution of this project relates to the sample recruited for the study. Indeed, my research was based on participation from faith actors within this case, constituting an elite sample and a cross-gender group of Muslim actors. That is to say, whilst the focus on women helps to plug the lacuna in previous knowledge systems and recognises the 'other' half of humanity, it is important to also consider Muslim masculinities and male actors who are part of grassroots efforts, as well as communal, and institutional strategies on issues such as domestic violence (Hammer 2012).

This is where my study enters the conversation, in that, this project included Muslim male efforts to engage with taboo and contested topics like domestic violence, female genital mutilation/cutting, and gender/gender justice praxis. In this case, the Muslim male faith actors were considered allies and were able to challenge homosocial discourses on topics around domestic violence and FGM,

thereby suggesting a counter-narrative to orientalist narratives about Muslim male patriarchy. These issues were explored in detail in chapters five, six, and seven.

One of the principles of feminist research is to focus on unheard voices or those who may have been classed as marginalised or 'victims' of power structures, enabling these usually unheard individuals and groups to participate, contribute, and collaborate towards new forms of knowledge development. Subsequently, those who had previously been silenced, and voiceless, and who are constituted as part of the unhistorical Other, are heard. Another principle of feminist research methodologies, especially in terms of qualitative interviewing, is that it enables feminist-informed researchers to consider their subjectivities along with those whom they research, thereby breaking down barriers between the knowledge collector/producer and the knowledge provider or the known and knower (Etherington 2004).

In chapter five, buoyed by the literature on feminist reflexivity and the development of insider-outsider research methodologies on the dynamics of the interview process, and intending to not cause epistemic violence (Spivak 1988), I approached the interview process on the basis that this literature would equip me with the toolbox I needed. However, I soon discovered that whilst many of the tools inside my box could be drawn upon, there was one significant gap.

This arose in terms of my subjectivity around researching religious subjects with whom I shared and unshared histories, experiences, and subjectivities. Quite simply, I did not consider my own spiritual subjectivities and how my own

complicated identity with the intersection of multiple and complex subjectivities around Muslim identities, gender, position, and positionality, would result in obscuring and informing the research. In this way, the call to develop new methods to support researchers who undertake Muslim-on-Muslim research is then part of the contribution of this research project.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Building on this project one area of further research would be to return to the original data to examine in what ways the experiences of different religious subjects in organisations outside of development, but who operate within FBOs in the UK, might also experience competing, converging, and conflicting Islamic, feminist, and for example, queer discourses. Exploring queer Muslim identities would further complicate the binaries, and how or whether re-orientalism surfaced within these contexts.

Another area of research would be the area of developing new methods around interviewing Muslim-on-Muslim research to explore ways in which researchers' reflexivity can contribute to not repeating epistemic violence or re-orientalist discourses.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Having entered the impasse this conversation attempted to complicate and uncover nuances that betwixt the discourses of the past and present rather than provide neat conclusions. The impasse can become a space from which binaries can fix ideas and it can invite greater diversity, fluidity, and plurality. My hope is that I have in some small way contributed to the latter.

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Religion and development (RaD) has emerged as a new academic sub-discipline since the turn of the 21st century, following decades of secular assumptions and attitudes dominating development studies, and international development more broadly. In 2019, there was a little doubt that religion has been incorporated into development studies and it is therefore timely to re-appraise RaD. Recent scholarship suggests that RaD increasingly informs, engages with and influences development studies and development practice—providing rich empirical material, broader disciplinary engagement and deeper analytical insight. Drawing on a survey of almost—mainly English language—700 publications, this article traces the emergence and establishment of RaD. The article traces the emergence of the field (2000–10) and then its subsequent more critical engagement with development studies (between 2011 and 2018). The article concludes by identifying five emerging contemporary research themes within RaD and future research opportunities.

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In this article, I raise a question and acknowledge a 'feminist debt'. The 'feminist debt' is to the politics of location, and the question asks: what particular stipulations and enablements does a critical reflexive feminist politics of location put in place for knowledge production and for doing feminist theory? I suggest that there are at least three stipulations/enablements that a critical reflexive politics of location puts in place for knowledge production. Firstly, it demands/enables scholarly accounts to reveal their location within the prevailing entanglements of power relations and to highlight the politics of struggle that underpin these. Secondly, it demands/enables conceptual work from different geographical spaces – and in particular, it facilitates the production of conceptual work in non-standard background contexts and conditions. And finally, a critical reflexive politics of location demands/enables a methodological response to capture the different conceptual and analytical and empirical knowledges produced in different locations.

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APPENDIX

¹ *Feminism and development discourses – the ‘veil’ and Muslim women’s liberation.*

According to postcolonial feminist scholars, development discourses have constructed both the ‘Third World’ and ‘Third World Women’ in terms of underdevelopment (Mohanty, 1991a; Balchin, 2003). As such, they are viewed as developmental victims or perhaps more accurately, as targets. Indeed, contemporary narratives on women’s empowerment and development projects emphasize women as the key recipients of interventions, whether economic, for example micro-finance projects in Bangladesh, which target women (Kabeer, 2005); or which view women as central to the role of bringing about ‘democratization’ and ‘modernisation’ projects within Arab societies (Jad 2007:177) and as it did, in the case of Afghanistan (Shepherd, 2006). However, Muslim women’s narrative identities within development discourses still continue to identify them as ‘developmental “victims” of religion (Balchin 2003:41). Moreover, Muslim women are constructed as ‘veiled’ women, with no agency, who are under the patriarchal control of Muslim men (Ahmed, 1992; Shepherd, 2006; Thapar-Bjorkert and Shepherd, 2010). Shepherd (2006) argues that the veil is used as a symbolic marker to homogenise Muslim women, which represents them as victims whose entry into the public sphere depends on their liberation from the veil. As such, development discourses on Muslim women as veiled women, as passive women, as women who are victims of Islam, Muslim traditions, and Muslim men, are then simply replaying Orientalist discourses

(Badran, 2008; Viner, 2002; Balchin 2003). This 'freeze[s] third world women in time, space, and history' (Mohanty 1991a: 6). Furthermore, it reduces Muslim women to the discourse of the veil in which the 'veil' becomes a developmental issue. But to what extent does the discourse of the veil warrant so much academic or popular debate and is the reductive focus on the veil really about (Muslim) women's liberation or is it a means through which to divert attention from 'broader global structural inequalities'? (Balchin 2003:40).

societies, particularly for those groups who have moved from rural to urban areas. In order to help facilitate the tensions between the shifts from rural to urban (traditional to modern) the veil then offers a bridge through which young women can enter into this new space – and perhaps re-claim it - it is a symbol of this social status change. For Cooke (2008:92) this new 'cosmopolitanism' is marked by religion in which the Muslimwoman can construct a 'cosmopolitan identity with local roots that unites them with a "shared culture, diffused by electronic media, education, literacy, urbanisation, and modernisation"' (Cooke2008:98). Rachel Rinaldo (2010:422-23) in exploring 'Islamic piety as public practice' in Indonesia argues that the veil is a marker of a pious Islam in the public sphere and that 'pious Islam emphasizes women's participation in community life'. In other words, for some Muslim women, it is a sign of urban development and their participation within it. This argument gains some saliency when viewed in contrast to Parshall and Parshall's (2002:59) example of Bangladesh, which highlights how unrealistic it is for rural (Muslim) women to wear the veil when working in the field. Yet despite these potential different readings of the veil, within development discourses and particularly amongst some donors, especially those who still

subscribe to Orientalist discourses, there is still the advancement of the thesis that Muslim women's liberation rests on whether they are veiled or unveiled (Bartelink and Buitelaar, 2006; Cooke, 2008; Badran, 2008; Ahmad, 2008). Brenda Bartelink and Marjo Buitelaar (2006) analysis of a Dutch action research project in the Yemen, highlights how 'images of Afghan women removing the burqa after the defeat of the Taliban came to symbolise Muslim women's liberation' and that the normative discourse in this cases study was premised on the conflation of the veil as representing the 'Muslimwoman' (Cooke 2008:91) as the 'designer icon of "Islam/ic oppression"' (Badran 2008:104). For Fawzia Ahmad (2008: 101) it is only when the veil is 'disassociated from "strategy"... will it then become a nonissue'. It is, she argues, in its neutrality that it will allow for the focus by Muslims, and I argue, development discourses, on other issues such as poverty, violence and other rights (Ahmad 2008: 101). However, the problem still remains that the 'process of marking and naming' the category Muslimwoman still bears both colonial and religious discourses (Zine 2008:110).

The legacy of this dates back to colonial discourses and colonial feminism in particular when Western discourses of the veil from that period argued that Muslim women needed to be unveiled to be liberated (Ahmed, 1992; 2011). Lord Cromer¹ is often cited as having advocated the need to free Muslim women (in Egypt) from the oppression of the veil. The veil according to the colonial thesis was a marker of women's oppression and 'Islam's degradation of women' and was a 'visible marker of the differentness and inferiority of Islamic societies' (Ahmed 1992:152); a discourse which as we have seen, is still used in Western narratives of Muslim societies and its relationship to (Muslim) women (Shepherd

2006). In accentuating the veil as a marker of the 'otherness' of Muslim traditions and Muslim societies, the veil was impregnated with multiple meanings and the attack on the veil was also seen as an attack on Islam and 'otherness'. Consequently, the 'other' accentuated the veil as a potential marker of its 'self'. In other words, colonial feminism was responsible for imbuing the veil with its current symbolic status (Ahmed, 2011); this is, perhaps, why these narrative warrants continuation in its current formulation, because it is seen as legitimate. In other words, the discourse serves a purpose, as it did on the 'War on Terror' (Viner, 2002; Shepherd, 2006).

The colonial discourse of the veil gave rise within Muslim societies to internal debates as to the status and meaning of the veil, not only in terms of women's liberation, but, as a signifier of how Muslim societies would choose to dance with modernity (Ahmed 2011). Within the Muslim context (especially in Egypt) the internal debates about the veil were contextualised within geopolitical and internal political discourses (i.e. anti-British/anti-occupation discourses and modernity versus traditional and authentic versus western binaries). As such, when 'liberal' Arab writers¹ took up the gauntlet of debating women's liberation within their own societies, their employment of narratives similar to and often rooted within the colonial thesis, in which unveiling was seen as a marker (among other signs) of modernity within Muslim societies, were then severely critiqued by 'nationalists and pan-Islamists' writers and groups (Ahmed, 1992; 2011). This group believed that modernity did not include a rejection of Islam or that it should be framed within the wholesale adoption of Westernisation, instead it ought to be seen as a 'return to Islamic values accompanied by the judicious adoption of certain

Western practices' (Ahmed 2011:34). They saw such works as a replay of 'colonial feminism' (Ahmed 1992:151). The stage was set and the debates and discourses around the veil were now framed (from within the Muslim context) within the parameters of anticolonial and nationalist struggles. Here the veil took on a specific meaning; it was an 'instrument for political action' (Bulbeck 1998:31) and for Muslim women it was a symbol of solidarity - a feminised resistance and affirmation to the anticolonial and nationalist struggle (see Bulbeck, 1998 for Algeria; Todihi, 1991 for Iran). It is here that the discourse of the veil became further entrenched and contextualised within the binary of the West versus Islam.

However, the postcolonial period brought with it further debates over the veil within the Muslim context. Here the veil was then further contextualised within the traditional versus modernity binary, as these new modern Muslim nation-states struggled to find their identity and follow development trajectories. In *A Quiet Revolution*, Ahmed (2011:11) discusses the 'unveiling movement of the early twentieth century' within Muslim societies. By the 1950s 'the veil had virtually disappeared in Egypt' and other parts of the Middle-East (Ahmed 2011:20). Drawing on Muslim (male) commentators of the period, she highlights how unveiling was viewed, at that time, as a marker of the advancement of Arab countries and that it was only the "most backward regions...in the countries of the Arabian peninsula – Saudi Arabia and Yemen' that such practices' persisted (Ahmed 2011:20). Ahmed (2011) suggests that while the colonial discourse of the veil may have influenced this view, it was a combination of the desire within Muslim societies to progress and the spread of Western ideas, which meant that 'the local meanings of the veil came to be superseded by Westerners' views of

the veil' (Ahmed 2011:44). For Ahmed (2011:44) the internalisation of the view - 'of the inferiority of Islam and Muslim societies' - by some Muslims may account for the valorisation of unveiling. As such, in their desire to display their progress and to show how advanced Muslim societies were, the veil was cast off. In other words, the veil became the sign through which Muslim societies displayed their advancement. Ahmed (2011:45) suggests that for women who unveiled there were a number of reasons but primarily it was as an 'expression of their longing for the goods, opportunities, and amenities of modernity'. However, as development outcomes failed to deliver the promises of economic growth, an alternative route to the failed (Western) development models emerged. Islamist discourses opened up the vacuum within the interior politics of Muslim societies; this opened the space for new debates on the veil and so began the 'veiling movement in the closing decades of the same century' (Ahmed 2011:11).

Early debates on unveiling had been a 'burning subject among women' in Egypt, who decided for themselves what 'meaning the veil held' (Ahmed 2011:39). As such, while unveiling during the early part of the twentieth century was not seen as a rejection of Islam or the embracement of secularism by Muslim women who unveiled, within Islamists narratives the return to the veil was a sign of "'true" Islam' (Ahmed 2011:43). It could be argued that within this framework the meaning of veil was being reclaimed, perhaps even returning to an indigenous and even local meaning of the veil, rather than, the normative Western meaning of the veil, which had dominated much of the previous discourse of the veil. Indeed, Ahmed's (2011:155) analysis of the resurgence of the veil in Egypt from the 1970s onwards highlights its evolution from a small minority of Muslim women

to its eventual 'practice of mainstream Muslims in Egypt'. Ahmed draws a parallel with the resurgence of Islam, Islamist movements and the return of the veil. Ahmed (2011) traces how young women having been influenced by the resurgence of Islam and the narratives of Islamist movements¹ began to develop a new dress code, as a means to highlight their difference to other Muslim women (and men) with their social context¹. The new Islamist inspired female dress code evolved into what Ahmed (2011:82) describes as a modern 'Islamic dress or legal dress', which over time morphed into what is now seen as a standardized garment, usually in 'sober solid colours...a long, loose robe with wide long sleeves' (Ahmed 2011:83). This signalled their 'superiority' in relation to other Muslims in society, both men and women (this was part of the message of the Brotherhood, which suggested that 'Muslims' had lost their way and only through returning to a true Islam, would they be on the right path). It also served as a signal to other-like minded Muslims and mainstream society that this alternative and different community were now present within society and so offered them a sense of belonging and community (Ahmed 2011:82). This Islamic dress then came to embody two key foundational ideas as advocated by Islamist movements, a 'society committed to gender segregation' and 'egalitarian principles and notions of social equality and justice across the classes' (Ahmed 2011:83). This new Islamic dress was a modern interpretation of a dress code by a 'new [Muslim] women' (Ahmed 2011:83) in the face of modernity and for their space within it. As Islamist movements gained momentum, the meaning of the veil changed for women, some adopted it freely, while others questioned it. While the adoption of the veil may have had a significant consequence for Iranian

women (Bulbeck, 1998) it, alongside Islamist movements, did however offer women a 'route to activism' (Ahmed 2011:12). Particularly as post independent states often showed hostility towards independent women's movements in Arab societies (Jad 2007:180; Pharaon 2004). Whether this new Islamic dress code was a consequence of development, that is, as a means to enable some young women to claim their rights on entering the public space, or whether it was a political instrument in the service of Islamists discourses, as a site for affirming authenticity versus westernisation, which happened in parallel with the resurgence of Islam as an indigenous discourse, is perhaps a debate that will continue. The conclusion that can be drawn is that Western discourses in as much as Islamic discourses have contributed towards the veil being adopted as a 'symbol of [political] resistance' (Ahmed 1992:164). The veil, as it is now, is 'a quintessential sign (among other things) of irresolvable tension and confrontation between Islam and the West' (Ahmed 2011:11).

The meaning of the veil has played an essential part in how Muslim women's narrative identities have been constructed; equally, it has been used to construct non-Muslim women's narrative identities. Ahmed (2011:37) for example highlights how women from all the ¹Abrahamic traditions had worn the 'veil' up until the colonial era, and that while Jewish and Christian women unveiled ahead of Muslim women, the image of 'veiling as a practice only of Muslim women...as a uniquely Islamic practice' was then identified in this era. This 'othering' of Muslim women and the silencing of their culturally relativistic feminism can be seen in terms of how Third World women have been constructed and contrasted with European women. So, for example, Victorian women were seen as 'civilised'

compared to the native female who was exposed, the naive female was encouraged to cover up, while the veiled woman was being asked to unveil. Post colonial feminists scholarship has critiqued Western feminists' scholarship for how it universalises all Third World women as a homogenous oppressed group and for its failure to recognise the plurality of Third World women's experiences. In terms of more contemporary narratives, the veiled woman has now replaced the exposed native woman as the normative signifier of the 'other'. This has two dimensions: the first, in that it maintains the suggestion that Western (white) women continue to be the superior marker of liberated womanhood, as is their feminism, and their definition and route to 'equality' (Bulbeck 1998:30; Shepherd, 2006). While the second is within the homogenous category of Third World women, in which Muslim women are now seen as the 'other' against which 'others' define the 'self'. I offer two examples; the first, is in relation to India in terms of how non-Muslim Indian women define the 'self' and 'other' through Indian Muslim women; and, the second, is in relation to Muslim women, particularly in terms of Muslim feminisms.

Nida Kirmani's (2009) work highlights how non-Muslim 'Indian women' distinguish themselves through the 'othering' of Muslim women, whom they perceive as 'victims' of religious and Muslim male oppression. Indian Muslim women, within this context, are then constructed through the category of their religious marker and, yet, despite the relative level of shared oppression experienced by most women as part of the broader patriarchal social structures within Indian society; (Indian) Muslim women are still constructed as the 'other'. The second example is in relation to Muslim women themselves, in terms of Muslim feminisms, which

not only advocate different and often seemingly competing models of 'feminism', equity versus equality, secular versus Islamic or Islamist, but that terms such as Muslim feminism and Islamic feminism are potentially 'a deliberate or unwitting "otherizing" or essentializing of Muslim women' (Tohidi 2003:141).

The discourse of the veil is another example of the heterogenizing and homogenisation process that marks Muslim women's narratives and identities; development discourses have been part of this process. Thus, the continued use of essentialist and Orientalist forms of 'othering' Muslim women highlights how 'simplistic discussions of the developmental impact (or not) of veiling' are in this debate (Balchin 2003:45). Furthermore, it perpetuates the myth that all Muslim women are simply 'victims' with no agency but women's activism and feminisms, in all their formulations, within Muslim societies, subvert such myths. There is a need to move beyond the veil as a development narrative and to ensure that Muslim feminisms and women's activism in Muslim societies is recognised, even if it is seen as a challenge to Western feminist discourses (Foley, 2004; Pharaon, 2004; Para-Mallam, 2006).