The experiences of Western Australian Muslims within the current political and social environment

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Dated: 30.11.2020
The Experiences of Western Australian Muslims within the Current Political and Social Environment

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the Master of Criminal Justice by Research

John Lehane
School of Arts and Humanities Edith Cowan University

November 2020

I declare that this written assignment is my own work and does not include: (i) material from published sources used without proper acknowledgment; or (ii) material copies from the work of other students.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to examine the experiences of Western Australian (WA) Muslims, within the context of the current Australian political and social climate, with a key focus on how political and social factors, and the vast introduction of Australian anti-terrorism legislation, may impact them. Also explored in this inquiry, was how mainstream media and their regular portrayal of Islamic-inspired terrorist attacks, which has at times connected all Muslims to these atrocities, is creating a social division within the Australian community which is difficult to overcome.

A generic qualitative methodology was utilised to best capture the lived experiences of the participants involved in this research, which concluded that the WA Muslims interviewed had all experienced differing levels of prejudice, racism and discrimination from fellow WA residents (Non-Muslims), with a perception that western media (including social media) is largely responsible for this phenomenon.

The implications of this phenomena highlighted the need for Federal and State government to work closer with WA Muslims and to involve them more in the introduction of new anti-terrorism legislation, so that unbiased and non-discriminatory laws can be established. This thesis further highlights the need for media organisations and public figures, to accurately report on Australian Muslims and on the Islam religion itself, and not create links to Islamic-inspired atrocities occurring around Australia and the world, to all the followers of this Islamic faith.
USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the most important person in my life, my wife Trish.

I could not have completed this thesis without her support and encouragement, and most importantly, her endless patience with me. Particularly as I attempted to balance this research with all the other commitments in my life, and how she dealt with all my frustrations and exasperations without complaint.
Acknowledgments

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I would like to acknowledge the Western Australian Police Force for affording me the opportunity to complete this thesis, and Edith Cowan University for providing this scholarship and the additional support that accompanied this grant.

I wish to offer my great appreciation to Mr Ibrahim Latheef, Strategic Advisor for the Community Engagement Division (WA Police), who was instrumental in assisting me locate participants for this study and for facilitating essential introductions.

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Last, but by no means least, I wish to acknowledge Dr Vincent Hughes for being my life saver and for spending innumerable hours on supporting, overseeing, and encouraging me to continue with this research. As a long-term friend and confident I could not have completed this without you Vince. Your friendship, support and counsel will never be forgotten.
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**Definition of Terms**

*Terrorism* – Under Australian law, a terrorist act is defined as when “the action is done or the threat is made with the intention of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause (Commonwealth Government of Australia, 2004).

*Islamic-caused attacks* - is defined as terrorist attacks caused by believers or followers of Islam who have committed these attacks for political, religious, or ideological reasons. This includes lone-wolf terrorism (single person attacks) in the name of Islam.

*Violent Extremism* - is the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals. This includes terrorism and other forms of politically motivated and communal violence. (Australia Federal Government - Living Safe Together fact sheet).

*Radicalisation* - happens when a person’s thinking and behaviour become significantly different from how most of the members of their society and community view social issues and participate politically. Only small numbers of people radicalise and they can be from a diverse range of ethnic, national, political and religious groups. (Australia Federal Government - Living Safe Together fact sheet).

*Islamophobia* - The term Islamophobia denotes negative and hostile attitudes towards Islam and Muslims. The term has been used by academics for some time and has more recently become part of political and media discourse. Islamophobia can cover hostile feelings, discrimination, exclusion, fear, suspicions or anxiety towards Islam or Muslims. (Islamophobia, Social Distance, and Fear of Terrorism in Australia Report, 2015).

*WA Muslims* are defined as those individuals who self-identity as Muslim and who may or may not be practicing all the rituals associated with the Islamic faith and who reside in Western Australia.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Contextualising My Research

The genesis for this thesis commenced in 1987 when as a probationary police officer, I resided next door to a Malaysian Muslim family in Gosnells, Western Australia (WA). I observed how this moderate family, who had shared birthday parties, holiday celebrations (both Muslim and non-Muslim) and good neighbourly relations with my wife, children and I, was constantly victimised by others whilst in their home, at shopping centres or when at social events (i.e. sporting events). This was, arguably, due to their Muslim religion and their overt wearing of easily identifiable Muslim clothing. This victimisation escalated over time from name calling and bullying to the firebombing of a community school bus on their property, which was the husband’s mode of employment. Rocks were continually thrown onto the roof of the house and on two occasions through their front window. As such, I believe out of fear for their safety, this family suddenly moved to an undisclosed location and I ceased to have contact with them.

I ultimately became aware, through my experiences in the Western Australian Police Force (WA Police) that this phenomenon of victimisation was not uncommon, and in fact I learnt that many other people and groups were singled out for victimisation due to their religious beliefs or cultural differences. This notion of intolerance within the community is supported by Mansouri (2012), who argues that anti-immigration and racist discourse has been growing in Australia since the 1970s. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Annual Report (1996) asserts that this problem was accentuated with the arrival of political refugees from Lebanon and Vietnam. These refugees were labelled ‘Boat People” by mainstream media and this term, according to Philips and Spinks (2011), was used as a derogatory term to simplistically differentiate Australians from Non-Australians.
In 2002, I commenced a new role within the WA Police Community Engagement Division, where I held responsibility for the Multicultural Affairs Department of that area. It was here that I had the opportunity to work closely with culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CaLD), which included newly arrived Muslim communities. This opportunity gave me a richer understanding of the challenges faced by emerging communities when trying to integrate into the Australian way of life. As part of my learning journey (see figure 1, p. 14), I enrolled in various management and academic courses, where I was introduced to an array of leadership concepts and theories, particularly the concept of achieving ‘public value’ (Moore, 2012). Moore highlights the important behaviours required of leaders and organisations to achieve ‘public value’, by engaging with communities and involving them holistically to tackle the difficult social problems that they are experiencing.

The progression of my learning through these development opportunities led me to work in the field of management at various levels, including as the Officer in Charge/Manager of the Laverton Police Complex from 2012 to 2014. Laverton is a remote policing destination, which includes numerous Aboriginal communities that border the states of WA, South Australia, and the Northern Territories. At the size of 600,000 sq.km and an area twice the size of France, Laverton is considered the ‘largest police beat in the world’ (Government of Western Australia, Media Statement 10 August 2005). The most prevalent long-term social issues faced by a large percentage of residents from these Laverton communities became termed the ‘wicked problems’ (Briggs, 2007). Those difficult and challenging generational problems, which public-sector service providers (including police) continually attempt to address, to make a safer, healthier and more secure WA community. This lived experience encouraged me to focus on the realisation of working alongside and engaging with all sections of our community in WA, to develop partnerships to enhance social cohesion and harmony. My focus was not only in the remote regional areas of WA but also within the Perth Metropolitan Region.
When I returned to Perth, I observed the vast growth of media attention highlighting the likelihood of a terrorist attack occurring in Australia, due to attacks occurring in other Western democratic states around the world (Rane & Abdalla, 2007). I also observed firsthand how Islam as a religion and Muslims as a people were portrayed in some public arenas as what Khawaja and Khawaja (2016) describe as the ‘others in our society’ - Muslims who are arbitrarily placed under suspicion due to recent Islamic-inspired terrorist attacks. Moreover, I anecdotally observed how the impact of these suspicions resulted in the introduction of new anti-terrorist legislation by the Australian government, which Brown, Harris and Russell (2010) argues, has created unintended consequences and further social wicked problems within Australia.

Consequently, I applied for and was successful in obtaining a joint Criminal Justice Masters scholarship, between Edith Cowan University and the WA Police, to explore this phenomenon with a focus on understanding the experiences of West Australian Muslims in the current political and social climate. This research in turn allowed for a point-in-time reference of understanding how newly introduced counter terrorism legislation and the media focus on Islam and Muslims, is impacting on certain sections of our community. This learning journey is illustrated in Figure 1 below.
Significance of the Study

This research will provide a point-in-time reference of the experiences of WA Muslims in the current political and social climate. It will describe how some WA Muslims perceive their current living and working situation and determine if any of the reported adverse experiences felt by their Eastern State Islamic counterparts are also experienced by Muslims living in Western Australia.
There is little research currently available to gauge how WA Muslims are being affected by world events concerning Islamic-inspired terrorist attacks, or on how the Australian media coverage of these events, is impacting on them, given that very often the western media arguably associates the religion Islam, and Muslims in general, with these attacks. Also, the research into how WA Muslims are impacted by current national anti-terrorist legislation is scant and this research affords the opportunity to fill a gap in this academia area.

The main aim of this research is to understand how the current political and social landscape within Australia is impacting or shaping the personal and collective behaviours of WA Muslims, in light of this anti-terrorism legislation and the Australian media’s portrayal of Islamic-inspired attacks. It is hoped, subsequently, that the insights from this research will assist policy makers to better understand the impacts that this targeted legislation may have on a large section of our community. Furthermore, and more importantly, it is hoped that this research provides insight for policy and law makers to become more cognisant and aware of how the enriched formulation of legislation, which involves greater community participation, can lead to greater social harmony and public value.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

According to the 2016 Australian Census there were 604,200 people who self-identified as Muslim in Australia, which constitutes 2.6% of the total Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Projections made by the Pew Research Centre, which is a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping the world, as well as providing demographic facts and figures on national residents, has speculated that by 2050, the number of Australian Muslims will increase to 1.4 million or 5% of the population. This will then make Islam the second largest religion in Australia (Hassan & Martin, 2015).

To understand the full context of integration of Western Australian (WA) Muslims into the wider Western Australian community, and to better comprehend the challenges and difficulties that they may face as an emerging community, I undertook an extensive review of current Australian and global literature, which detailed many of the commonalities between Muslim communities who are integrating into western democracies. From this narrative review I discovered many common themes experienced by Muslim communities, which in turn assisted this research in determining the phenomenon which required exploring and the questions that required answering to understand the ‘experiences of WA Muslims within the current political and social climate’.

This narrative review involved researching and evaluating current studies of this phenomenon and identifying trends and patterns in the literature, which also assisted the researcher to determine the best evidence to support the claims made during this research, with credit attributed to the authors of those studies cited throughout the thesis.

Overall a common reality was realised from the review of the majority of these studies and this phenomenon was identified as a feeling of alienation and mistrust from the host communities and experiences of a term which has become more widely known as Islamophobia.
Islamophobia

Islamophobia, is a term used by many academics, including Hassan & Martin (2015), which denotes the negative and hostile attitudes of westerners towards Islam and Muslims, and which has intensified in Australia and has “now taken root in public and academic discourse” (Hassan & Martin, 2015, p.8). This experience does not appear to be limited to the Australian context. In an extensive case study with Muslims living in London, Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010) determined that there is a popular position held by many public commentators, that Muslims and Islam are a “threat to the safety, cohesion and wellbeing of all communities and countries in Europe” (Githens-Mazer & Lambert, 2010, P. 4). However, Githens-Mazer and Lambert oppose this view, and suggest that the main aims of Muslims who migrate around the world, is to do so with the intention of creating better lives for themselves, whilst also “providing significant and valuable contributions to the safety, prosperity and cohesion of their host communities and countries” (Githens-Mazer & Lambert, 2010, p. 4).

The term Islamophobia has grown in prominence since first articulated around the start of the 21st century, and has been discussed at length by academic researchers, including Sayyid and Abdoolkarim (2010), Sheridan (2006) and Spalek (2005) who argue that Islamophobia is a progressive global phenomenon which generally consists of eight pertinent elements. These elements are further examined in the 2010 London Anti-Muslim Hate Crime Study, conducted for the European Muslim Research Centre, by researchers Jonathan Githens-Mazer and Robert Lambert and are described as follows:

1. “Islam is seen as a monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to change.

2. Islam is seen as separate and ‘other’. It does not have values in common with other cultures, is not affected by them and does not influence them;

3. Islam is seen as inferior to the West. It is seen as barbaric, irrational, primitive and sexist;
4. Islam is seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism and engaged in a clash of civilisations:

5. Islam is seen as a political ideology and is used for political or military advantage.

6. Criticisms made of the West by Islam are rejected out of hand.

7. Hostility towards Islam is used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society; and

8. Anti-Muslim hostility is seen as natural or normal”.

(Githens-Mazer and Lambert, 2010, p. 17)

**Australian anti-terrorism legislation response promotes feelings of Islamophobia**

In addition to Australian public sentiment and attitudes, the vast introduction of Australian anti-terrorism legislation since September 11, 2001, when 19 militants associated with the Islamic extremist group al Qaeda hijacked four airplanes and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States, thereafter referred to as 9/11, and the alleged restrictive control powers that they possess, has created a national security response measure that is unprecedented since the World Wars (Williams, 2011). These measures, according to Ali (2016), have arguably created a political landscape in Australia where basic human rights can be ignored for the sake of national security; and where, it is proposed, national security measures have not only failed to ‘prevent or even stall’ levels of radicalisation in Australia, but might have even inflated the risk of violent radicalisation by its application and targeting of specific individuals (Ali, 2016, p.43)

Global terrorist attacks on Western democracies and the fear that this phenomenon will only increase, has seen Australia respond by introducing extensive anti-terrorism legislation, such as the Australian Anti-Terrorism Act (2005), the Australian Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2015), and the Australian Defence White Paper (2016), to name just a few of the multitude of Acts ratified. This legislation has been criticised by some human rights advocates, including the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (2004) and Amnesty International (2008), as laws that breach the standard conventions of human rights
by extending further and further into the everyday livelihoods of Australian residents, and restricting some of their most basic freedoms and movements in the process (Joseph, 2004). These anti-terrorism laws have provided police and security agencies with broad questioning and arrest powers, and some citizen advocacy groups suggest that these introduced laws primarily “target Muslims, due to their faith and culture” (Messa, 2015, p. 43).

In conjunction with this issue, increased incidences of extremist right-wing politics and activism in Australia has created a situation where police and security agencies now must perform their duties within the context of a ‘new terrorism’. Lambert and Parsons (2016) and Mythen and Walklate (2006) examined the context of this ‘new terrorism’ and claim that this term was coined to explain the current situation in Western democratic states which includes favouring a political position within security agencies and government departments, whereby extensive and broad legislation and policies are introduced to address the growing fear of terrorism, in an effort to prevent the same. This orientation towards over prescribed legislation to address the threat of terrorism has become more widely known and understood by critical observers, as this ‘new terrorism’ and critics such as Pickering et al. (2007) and Akbarzadeh and Roose (2011) suggest it remains actively aimed towards Muslim minorities, who are treated as suspect, necessitating state surveillance and control and creating an atmosphere of Islamophobia.

This increased feeling of Islamophobia, whereby Muslims are treated with suspicion and subjected to fear and harassment by other sections of the community, is now claimed to have extended into the social, political and economic context of Australian lives, and has witnessed an increase in anti-Muslim and anti-immigration sentiment that is intensifying and flourishing from state to state. This is particularly evident through the increasing politics and growing support for right-wing populists and politics within Australia, which has seen the rise of right-wing political groups vying for Australian votes on principles of exclusion. For example, One Nation, The Australia First Party and The Australian Liberty Alliance; the latter of these which promotes a party principle to stem the flow of Muslim migration into
Australia, amidst the claim that “Islam is not just a religion, but a Totalitarian Ideology with global aspirations of world dominance that must be halted”
(http://australianlibertyalliance.org.au/).

Empirical evidence from many Western democratic countries suggests that this anti-Muslim sentiment is flourishing across many sections of the community and that Muslims in many Western countries feel they are adversely affected by this reaction and they fear that they are directly targeted by newly introduced anti-terrorism laws and practices (Precht, 2007). It is believed that this anti-Muslim sentiment will increase amongst Western democracies as Islamic-caused terrorist attacks continue, or the fear of these attacks remain. With each new terrorist attack linked with the Islamic State or their affiliations, blame will be levelled at all Muslims by some individuals, and this may cause some Muslims to fear for their own safety in Australia.

Consequently, Australian Muslims may also become more mistrusting of people and organisations outside of their cultural communities (Khan & Ahmad, 2014). This mistrust in turn, will create greater challenges for police and security agencies who are attempting to work with and alongside Muslim communities in Australia, with the intention of reducing opportunities for violent extremism, and preventing home grown Islamic-caused terrorist attacks from occurring.

Within the context of the new terrorism environment and the introduction of new anti-terrorism laws, there is also a need for the Australian government to ensure the accountability of agencies and jurisdictions that uphold and administer this new legislation. This is highlighted within the speech given by the former Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd, who when delivering his first national security statement as Prime Minister, to the Federal Parliament on December 4, 2008 stated:

“Our national security interests must also be pursued in an accountable way which meets the government’s responsibility to protect Australia, its people and its interests while preserving our civil liberties and the
rule of law. This balance represents a continuing challenge for all modern democracies seeking to prepare for the complex national security challenges of the future. It is a balance that must remain a conscious part of the national security policy process. We must not silently allow any incremental erosion of our fundamental freedoms”.

It can be argued that this erosion of fundamental freedoms has extended to the Australian Muslim communities, amidst the claim by some sections of the Australian legal fraternity, who propose that many of these particular anti-terrorism laws fail in the test of fairness and balance and cite the high-handedness of the Australian government in introducing laws that are prescribed to combat terrorism, but in fact do little more than impede on basic human rights and in particular the human rights of Australian Muslim communities (Gearty, 2008).

According to Williams (2011), the number of anti-terror laws passed by the Australian federal Parliament since September 11 is striking and represents a more significant level of legislative outputs than those of nations facing a far greater threat from terrorism. In a comparative analysis of the anti-terror laws passed in a range of democratic nations over the last decade, Williams argues, Australia’s response has been one of ‘hyper-legislation’, with Australia ‘caught up in the 9/11 effect’. He claims that “this degree of legislative activism is striking compared even to the United Kingdom’s active agenda and much greater than the pace of legislation in the United States or Canada. Australia’s hyper-legislation, he claims has “strained the ability of the parliamentary opposition and civil society to keep up, let alone provide effective opposition to, the relentless legislative output” (Williams, 2011, p. 1145).

These extensive national security measures have created feelings of injustice amongst some sections of the Australian Muslim community, as they feel they are directly targeted by this legislation, which subsequently has fuelled feelings of discrimination and racism, which supports the concept surrounding the term Islamophobia (Hassan & Martin, 2015).
Media response to Islamic-inspired terrorism and the link to Islamophobia

There is little research currently available to gauge how Western Australia (WA) Muslims are being affected by world events concerning Islamic-inspired terrorist attacks, but there is empirical evidence to demonstrate how the media’s coverage of these events is often linked to all Muslims living in Australia ((Islamophobia in Australia Report, 2017).

Acts of terrorism on Western democracies, and the aftermath from these attacks, are regularly showcased through multiple media platforms. The media concentration on these attacks tends to create a perception that terrorist attacks are a common occurrence; that they will occur in Australia and that Muslims will be the main instigators of these attacks (Chopra, 2015; Pietsch & McAllister, 2010).

However, it should be noted that whilst Australia has experienced numerous bombings in its short colonial history, including the Sydney Yugoslav General Trade and Tourist Agency bombing (1972), the Sydney Hilton Hotel bombing (1978), the Sydney Israel Consulate and Hakoah Club bombings (1982) and several fire bombings of Chinese restaurants in Perth during the 1980s, none of these attacks have been attributed to any specific outlawed Islamic organisation, who traditionally seek credit for such violent crimes.

Alternatively, Australia has experienced one of the world’s worst mass killings by an individual (Martin Bryant), who was convicted of shooting and killing 35 people at Port Arthur in Tasmania in 1996. In the post-investigation of this atrocity there was no established religious or political connection identified to explain these murders. So, despite the reality that a lone gunman without any known religious or political affiliation is of a greater threat to Australian lives than any planned Islamic-caused terrorist attack, the media and some politicians (legislators) continue to argue that Muslim terrorists are a higher potential threat to the safety and security of Australia (Burke 2016).

Howie (2006) claims that this phenomenon can be explained by thought contagion theory, which suggests that the media is instrumental in creating a ‘Theatre of Terror’ by spreading fear, through continuous headlines covering terrorist incidents across the globe, and
highlighting the possibility that they will also occur in Australia. The proposal by Howie is “the terrorist threat is exaggerated in the media, which creates disproportionate threat perceptions amongst media consumers” (Howie, 2006, p. 2). Howie’s thought contagion theory also proposes that if a thought or idea is dispersed often enough, by reputable sources, including trustworthy media outlets, then the idea can become a common belief for a large percentage of the population. This type of media reporting has, in part, fuelled the growing fear that an Islamic-caused terror attack will occur in Australia. A state of fear that continues to intensify through the actions of the Western media who continue to create a “constructed media version of Islam, which it is alleged, taints the reality” (Rane & Abdlla, 2008, p.39). This media approach, in turn, is creating a situation where in many instances Muslims have now become the most suspected community with regard to terrorist acts, and are labelled as being a direct threat to Australia. This has, it is proposed, led them to becoming the most vilified members of the Australian community in modern history (Islamophobia in Australia Report, 2017).

**Use of media to recruit Terrorist Jihadists**

The literature researched and reviewed during this research identified amongst the common themes associated with Australian Muslims and the media, many instances where media, as well as being a tool to vilify Muslims, in some circumstances, has also become a method utilised by extremist Islamists for the purpose of recruitment and incitement towards violence within Australia and overseas.

The narratives used by terrorist organisations to target and recruit terrorist jihadists, including many young Australians, is of a major concern to police, security agencies and key community leaders. The number of young people who were being coerced to join or support these organisations rose vastly between 2014 and 2016, and social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter became common avenues of recruitment by outlawed Islamic groups (Berger & Morgan, 2015). Recruiters used violent jihadi narratives to engage young people, particularly attracting those who already feel disenchanted with mainstream democratic
societies, and who heeded the call to restore the caliphate and who would use terrorism strategies in the name of Islam to achieve this (Ali, 2016).

Berger and Morgan (2015) identified in their research that during September to December 2014, over 46,000 twitter accounts were used by Islamic State (IS) supporters, with a significant proportion of these accounts located within the UK and Australia. The United Nations (UN) Office on Drugs and Crime Report (2012) highlighted the increased use of media technology by terrorist organisations for a wide range of purposes, including recruitment, financing and propaganda, incitement to commit acts of terrorism, and the gathering and dissemination of information for terrorist related purposes. They claim the changes in narratives used by terrorist organisations has remained contemporary, ensuring their continued engagement with younger generations to encourage them to become terrorist jihadists.

This contemporariness of social media use has allowed terror jihadist recruiters to attract sympathisers to their cause, many of whom are non-Muslims. By using sophisticated social media platforms, they have enticed many impressionable young people towards what they would perceive as a noble cause (Alarid, 2016). The well-established terrorist organisation, al-Qaeda, recognised the significance of social media for jihadi recruitment in the West, which caused former leader Osama bin Laden to claim that “90 per cent of the preparation for war is effective use of the media” (Alarid, 2016, p. 3). Bin Laden understood the power of social media to reach large audiences and to circulate his message worldwide, with very little effort required. The use of social media platforms to create and build communities of terrorist practices has continued since the demise of bin Laden, with his successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, continuing to seek conscription for his war against the West through podcasts, video messages and online tutorials, recruiting what he terms the ‘knights of the media jihad’ to join him in inciting terrorism.

European governments have fared no better in restricting the number of their citizens who have left the home country to fight with terrorist organisations overseas. Alarid (2016)
proposes that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Islam State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have both utilised social media as their main strategy for recruitment, within Europe and across the globe. During the years 2014 and 2015, they are suspected to have been successful in recruiting as many as five people per day travelling from Europe to join these organisations in the Middle East.

The American government also had citizens travelling through Turkey to join the self-declared caliphate by these organisations and are also perplexed to understand why hundreds of their citizens would take this dangerous journey to join these violent extremists in warfare against their home country (al-Ahmed & Dhamen, 2017).

Subsequent research considering this recruitment phenomenon, including that of Jones (2017) and de Graaf (2010), has highlighted the successful targeting of youth by terrorists through social media and points out that these terrorists used well known motivators to attract young people. This included showing graphic videos and pictures online that portrayed their people and their cause as the victims of atrocities and injustices instigated by western governments. This sparked an accord with many impressionable young people, who then wanted to strike out in anger, ensuring that the terrorists’ violent aims and intent were acted upon. This jihadist command for action was achieved not only by travelling overseas to the Middle East, but also by performing violent jihad on their own home soil, in the name of this caliphate.

Strategies to address these narratives and reduce their influence are of paramount importance to anti-terrorism practitioners, with effective community engagement and community stakeholder involvement identified as the significant pathway to steer young people away from terrorism. (Jacobson, 2010).

Western Liberal political attitudes towards Muslims

Racist, uninformed and unsophisticated comments and slogans such as “Not every Muslim is a terrorist, but every terrorist is a Muslim” as quoted by One Nation leader Pauline Hanson, when responding to the Paris terrorist attacks in 2015, have become popular language
for many right-wing political leaders, in an attempt to address and even inflame Westerners’ concerns surrounding Islam. This includes United States (US) President Donald Trump (New York Times, November 2017), Dutch Politician Geert Wilders (ABC News, March 2017) and French Politician Marine Le Pen (The Washington Post, April 2017), who have all made disparaging remarks about Islam and Muslims in the media in recent times. These examples highlight the image construction that is taking place against Islam on a global scale. It is only lately that this anti-Muslim sentiment has been challenged; however, it is still espoused as factual among certain sectors of the Western community (Hassan & Martin, 2015). Similarly, the phenomenon of mass Muslim migration which occurred in Europe (particularly in Western Europe) in recent years, has created a universal anti-Muslim political and social rhetoric, which is swelling across the globe (Foroutan, et al., 2014). This rhetoric has retrospectively produced a dramatic increase in right wing populism and open racism in protest of this migration (Greven, 2016).

**Australian government response to the threat of terrorism**

There exists in Australia today, a perception that there is a threat of a terrorist related attack occurring on Australian soil. This perception of a threat is reinforced by the National Government Threat Level which has remained consistent since 2015. This threat level indicates that a terrorist attack is probable and likely contributes to the belief by many policymakers that foreign terrorist fighters, who have returned to Australia from conflicts in outlawed States, or home dissidents who support extremist anti-Western organisations and ideologies, have the means and motivation to conduct such an attack (Australian Defence White Paper, 2016). This level of security has remained as such due to one alleged terrorist attack and five disrupted terrorist plots occurring in Australia during 2016 (Australian National Counter-Terrorism Plan, 2017). These occurrences indicate to the government that there remains a real threat of a terrorist attack occurring in Australia. In response, the Australian Government has introduced very broad and far-reaching anti-terrorism legislation
and policies that have rivalled and even surpassed many other Western democracies who have experienced far more terrorist-related crimes than Australia (Williams, 2011).

Australian security agencies expect that terrorist plots and attacks will occur within Australia, and this likelihood has caused the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to now consider terrorism as one of the major and most likely threats to our national security. As a result, the ADF has committed extensive resources and effort, including training, in preparation for combating this phenomenon (Australian White Paper, 2016).

**Australian government global partnerships to combat terrorism**

The Australian Government remains committed to maintaining the strong and historical coalition-led military relationship and partnership with the United States of America (US), through the ‘ANZUS Treaty’ (https://usa.embassy.gov.au/australia-and-us-relations), which continues to maintain joint-government approval, through the bipartisan support of all major Australian political parties. This bipartisan and coalition approach as well as assisting Australia to prepare for terrorism on home soil has also increased the fear of the likelihood of Australia and Australians being targeted by opponents of this coalition, through acts of terrorism (Lyon, 2005). This belief is evidenced in the writings of many critical observers of this coalition, including Borgu (2005) and Dibb and Brabin-Smith (2013), who claim that the establishment and continuation of this coalition with the US is one of the main reasons Australia is now targeted by terrorists or will be further targeted by terrorist organisations. They believe this military relationship and the combat support provided by Australia into specific failed States, which is deemed by dissidents in some quarters, to be both unlawful and unwelcome, is a major cause as to why there may be committed terrorist acts orchestrated or planned for Australia. These proposed attacks and threats have been described as a direct response to the US and their allies, which includes Australia’s involvement in international affairs.
Australian Federal and State partnerships to combat terrorism

The Australian Defence Force, who has ownership surrounding the protection and security of Australian nationals, in relation to terrorist activities that target Australians, realises the impact of this coalition relationship between Australia and the US and they also understand that they alone cannot be solely responsible for anti-terrorism strategies and actions. As a result, they have sought all Australian national and state policing jurisdictions to become involved in the response to address home-grown terrorism, to reduce this threat. National security has become a part of business as usual for Australian policing and security jurisdictions who, alongside the ADF, are required to prepare for terrorist attacks and attempt to prevent this harm to Australian citizens (Australia’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy, 2015). This has resulted in a situation whereby all police agencies in Australia have commenced the establishment of anti-terrorism networks at both the national and state levels; and have according to some critic’s enacted far-reaching legislation with broad powers, at great expense and serious inconvenience to the national resident (Ransley & Mazorelle, 2009).

Role of the State Police to Combat Terrorism

The current discourse surrounding the concept of terrorism has created new challenges for policing jurisdictions and security agencies within Western democracies. For example, police now need to comprehend why some individuals have chosen to travel overseas to join terrorist groups, or why they would plan terrorist attacks at home, and they need to develop strategies to successfully combat this threat and enforce the legislation that has been enacted to deal with this issue. Numerous Australians are known to have travelled to Syria to join the Islamic State (IS) and associated splinter groups as future terrorist jihadists, escalating the risk that they will commit acts of terror abroad as well as within Australia when they return (Zammit, 2015). Even with the fall of the attempted Islamic State Caliphate (Intent on global Islamic rule) in Syria in recent times and the reclaiming of Mosul and Ragga by coalition forces, the threat of a terrorist attack by returning jihadists remains high.
It is now believed that as these organisations have been forced underground it is feasible that this threat will intensify, as it is highly likely that they will need to perpetrate more violent attacks abroad, in an attempt to remain relevant on the global scene (Gunaratna, 2018).

The historical watch and wait model of policing, where predominantly reactive strategies are established to identifying and apprehend serious criminals is unsuitable for terrorist related crimes. Police and security agencies now must rely on new anti-terrorism legislation and the broadening powers they provide to combat a perceived growing trend within Australia and are required to enact different policing strategies to try and stay one step ahead of terrorists. Failure to do so will have serious consequences for the Australian public. The introduction of this hyper-legislation begs the question from many civil rights groups however, of how many freedoms the public are willing to forego for the sake of this legislation, and whether these new laws discriminate against specific sections of the community (Walker, 2007).

Emerging from anti-terrorism efforts globally, in particular from the United Kingdom (UK) under the ‘Prevention of Violent Extremism’ policy agenda, local authorities and police have commenced the establishment of strategies designed to counter terrorism and, more importantly, to create community-based initiatives aimed at engaging and partnering with members of Muslim communities to do this (Thiel, 2009).

After conducting extensive research into the anti-terrorist strategies of police in the United Kingdom, Spalek and Lambert (2008) determined that many of the community-based models of policing remained traditionally dominated by hard top-down forms of engagement. This approach, they claim, has alienated police from many members of the Muslim community and created distrust and subsequent barriers for effective engagement. The root cause of this distrust was attributed to the methods applied by police and security agencies in their attempt to liaise and communicate with Muslim communities. Those methods typically constituted secretive and coercive activities; often for the purpose of intelligence gathering, where community members in some circumstances had been recruited as active informants and
agents for police and other security agencies. This type of strategy was designed to have Muslims work with authorities to report on their fellow community members, to reduce the risk of terrorism, but often at great personal risk to the informer and with little success (Open Society Foundation, 2016).

Results from the Home Office Citizenship Survey Report (2005), revealed that UK Muslims had experienced more discrimination from public bodies because of their religion, than any other group in the UK and amidst claims that Muslims encountered the greatest public hostility and prejudice due to their overt cultural dress attire, which made them easily identifiable as a Muslim (Choudhury & Fenwick, 2011). A desire to reduce this bias and prejudice promoted the need for the UK authorities to consider new approaches and this included the implementation of the ‘Contest Strategy’.

This ‘Contest Strategy’ (HM Government, 2006) introduced a ‘Prevent’ strand, characterised by a shift in the emphasis of police and security agencies’ normal operating procedures, to a softer bottom-up, community-based approach to prevent terror crimes. This model was intended to encourage police to work alongside, and with, Muslim communities in a partnership with no hidden agendas, with the desire to build trust (Spalek, El Awa, & McDonald, 2011). This strategy, which was also broadly implemented in the UK school system, has been espoused by UK security agencies and the UK government as a successful whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach to eradicate extreme radicalisation. However, The Muslim Council of Britain (the UK’s largest Muslim umbrella body) and many human civil right organisations within the UK claim that this Prevent Policy has “flawed underpinning’s and still leads to the Muslim community being viewed through the prism of security” (Versi, 2015, p. 1), which again creates feelings of alienation and mistrust towards authorities.

Research into the multiple failed policing strategies in the United States of America (US) following the 9/11 terrorist attacks also identified that eroded trust created the greatest challenge for police to work effectively with Muslims (Sharp & Atherton, 2007). Hard-line
policing methods involving surveillance, home raids, stop-search and detention methods, and legislative control of targeted Muslim communities, particularly young men who were considered a problem group, limited the ability of police to work collaboratively with Muslim communities to combat home-grown terrorism.

Impact of Australian legislation designed to combat terrorism

Anti-terrorism legislation has dramatically altered the Australian political landscape, and political observers have now witnessed the introduction of laws that possess an unprecedented reach. Williams (2011) suggests that this legislation has created a varied and worrying distinction to Australian laws; laws which Williams claims now include: restrictions on freedom of speech through new sedition offences and broader censorship rules; detention and questioning for up to a week by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) of Australian citizens not suspected of any crime; the banning of organisations by executive decision; Control Orders that can enable house arrest for up to a year; detention without charge or trial for up to 14 days; and warrantless searches of private property by police officers.

Williams further claims these laws “now include powers and sanctions that were once thought to lie outside the rules of a liberal democracy, except during the war years, and which have now become part of the Australian legal system” (Williams, 2011, p. 1137).

Some critics claim that this new terrorism inadvertently targets Muslims, making them suspect in the process and necessitating a special requirement of extensive surveillance and control due to their faith (Lambert 2010; Mythen & Walklate 2006). These sentiments and actions in turn have supported the rise of Islamophobia, whereby Muslims in Western democracies are considered by large sections of the community to be guilty of terrorist concepts, based primarily on their religious beliefs and their culture (Hassan & Martin, 2015).

Current literature which details the impact that anti-terrorism measures can have on the Muslim population is extensive and highlights a concern for policy makers in Australia, who are required to introduce laws and procedures that ensure all residents of Australia are treated in a fair and equitable manner (Murphy, Cherney & Barkworth, 2015).
The Islamic Council of New South Wales (ICNSW), who represent a high proportion of the Muslim population within New South Wales, detailed in a Parliamentary Joint Committee public hearing that there “can be no doubt that the Muslim community bears the brunt of this legislation” (House of Representatives Committees – Implications for the Muslim Community Report, 2005, p. 6). They cite the fact that all arrests under the new legislation, at that time, were Muslims, and only Muslim organisations made it onto the National Declared Terrorist Organisation List.

The Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria also described their concerns for their Muslim communities. During this same House of Representatives submission, they heard from many Muslim community elders who believe that their individual communities are being actively targeted by this legislation. Many sections of the Victorian Muslim community describe how they feel they are being treated harsher than other sectors, by police and security agencies, who they believe “target them specifically because they are Muslim and Arab-speaking” (ICNSW transcript/public hearing 2005, p. 44).

The National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) also raised this point of view during this same public hearing convention. The NACLC highlighted the concerns of Australian Muslim communities and raised the question of whether these anti-terrorism laws actually “Indirectly discriminate against the Australian Muslim Community” (NACLC transcript, public hearing 7 June 2005, p. 27). This association raises the point that if Australian security agencies are “singling out a specific group, such as Muslims, over any other group then they may be breaching the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination” (2005, p. 27). The perception by many Australian Muslims who believe they are the main target of security agencies who are addressing the risk of violent extremism, is well publicised, and as authors Tahiri and Grossman (2013) explain; it is somewhat irrelevant if Australian Muslim communities only perceive as discriminative the treatment handed out by these security agencies, as this perception may become a reality.
to many, and then a common belief to many more. This perception of discrimination can in turn have an adverse impact on Muslim and non-Muslim relationships within Australia.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in their investigation of whether prejudice and discrimination were barriers to social inclusion, identified that discrimination can ‘affect people’s opportunities, their well-being and their sense of agency, which in turn can lead individuals to internalise the prejudice or stigma that is directed against them, manifesting in shame, low self-esteem, fear and stress as well as poor health’. (The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Division for Social Policy and Development: Social Development Brief #4, February 2018).

The Federation of Community Legal Centres, a peak body of 50 community legal centres in Victoria who provide free legal help to clients facing economic and social disadvantage, described at this same public hearing that “the fear by many Australian Muslims is so great that they would not even attend information sessions surrounding counter-terrorism legislation, because they feared that by just turning up and showing interest, they would attract unwanted attention from the Australian Security Services” (NACLC transcript, public hearing. 2005, p. 31).

The International Commission of Jurists’ (ICJ), which on its formal website describes itself as “the pre-eminent legal non-governmental organisation in the world, and amongst the world's leading human rights NGOs generally” (http://www.icj-aust.org.au/), stated in their submission to the Australian Commonwealth Joint Parliamentary Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD (2005) that whilst current Australian anti-terrorism legislation threatens the basic rights and fundamental freedoms of every Australian, it is more pointedly aimed at Muslim residents in Australia. They suggest that this creates a situation in Australia, which repeats the history of anti-terrorism measures of many other Western countries, whereby it is alleged that members of the Muslim community are targeted by legislation, and who may in response become alienated from government authorities. This can create a negative relationship
between this community and the police and reduce the co-operation and intelligence from the Muslim community that security agencies require to actively respond to real threats of terror.

**Community response to terrorism**

Governments are realising the importance of involving grassroots organisations and key community stakeholders in countering the influence of Islamic terrorist organisations, and in framing anti-terrorism strategies around the concept of community safety rather than state security. As acknowledged by Briggs and Strugnell (2011), local communities are the logical choice to help prevent radicalisation, as communities are closest to understanding and tackling the underlying social causes and drivers that can lead their community towards terrorism. Local communities are best positioned to identify the vulnerabilities that can influence individuals to become involved with these terrorist organisations and, through the normal patterns of their community life, are best equipped to identify the most appropriate and favourable strategies and methods to engage with possible terrorist jihadists and steer them away from terrorism.

Western democratic governments have for decades attempted to establish effective anti-terrorism strategies and programs, with the aim of reducing the likelihood of home-grown terrorism and ensuring the safety of their residents. As was evidenced by the rapid rise of Western residents (including Australians) travelling to Syria or Iraq between 2014 and 2018 to join specific terrorist organisations, many of these strategies have failed and existing literature supports more community involvement and promotes an holistic community partnership approach to be seriously considered.

Akbarzadeh and Roose (2011) suggests that Muslims in Australia remain ostracised by current Australian foreign policy-making and feel powerless in the development of current de-radicalisation policy strategies, which they believe deliberately targets them due to their faith. They further argue that these elements have created a situation where Australian Muslims feel alienated from the mainstream population, and this creates a greater need for police to create pathways to break down these barriers and develop trust and harmony with
Muslim communities. Involving Muslims more, in all tiers of the Australian governmental strategies and programs, to enhance social cohesion and reduce violent extremism, is a logical step in re-shaping current policies of exclusion and detachment.

Literature Review Conclusion

A broad review of the current literature available was essential to comprehend the phenomenon of terrorism in western democratic cultures and countries, and to understand the many impacts that government anti-terrorism measures and strategies can have on the Muslim community. Even though specific populations and the diverse cultures of Muslims differed from country to country, common themes of marginalisation and bias were evident, and the perceived feelings of being targeted by authorities and the adverse feelings of a disconnection with host Western residents, appeared to be the common characteristics felt by many Muslims. This was particularly evident with Muslims who had arrived at the host country as a refugee or who were not born in that country (Dunn et al. 2015).

The fear of a terrorist attack occurring on Australian soil and the perceived connections of these attacks to Muslims, has created a situation of fear with many Australians who, in response, have begun to mistrust Muslims or place them in a position of concern, as well as for many Australians to question whether this Islamic religion and culture fits into the common perception of what constitutes the traditional Australian way of life (Islamophobia Report, 2017).

Reported violent crime by Muslims and specific perceptions held that large areas of host country neighbourhoods are becoming ghettos for specific Muslim populations; and an unsafe area to frequent by non-Muslims, has fuelled this fear, and has played into the hands of anti-Muslim and anti-immigration commentators. Some Muslim dissidents cite this phenomenon as the norm and use this racist rhetoric as the rationale for stopping Muslim movement into Australia (Hassan & Martin, 2015).

Literature concerning the conventional and most established media organisations of Western democratic states, and their collective response to Islamic-caused terrorist attacks
formed a large part of this literature review. A special emphasis was placed on exploring the social construct that has been manifested by many media outlets concerning Islam and Muslims, specifically since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in America. This construct, it has been argued, has been a main catalyst for the creation of a discord and mistrust which exists in many western democratic states and which blames many Muslims for the attacks caused by radicalised Muslims, with or without any known connection to same (Bruneau, Kteily & Falk, 2017).

The exploration of this literature has created a baseline of possibilities on how Muslims in WA may feel about the current political and social climate of the world, and how they may perceive the manner in which their religion and faith is treated in Western Australia, or by Western democratic states generally. This review included capturing the detailed perceptions and beliefs of many Muslims who live within Western democracies and examined the described ‘lived experiences’ of international Muslims, as well as those who live in the other states and territories of Australia. However, a gap in this literature was exposed, as it became evident that this phenomenon has not been fully explored with Muslims who reside in WA.

There is limited research examining how current legislation introduced to combat this new terrorism has impacted upon WA Muslim residents, or how they perceive the way in which the Australian government, the Australian media and Australian residents in general are treating them. Therefore, in my research I sought to address the following question and address this academic gap:

“What are the experiences of Western Australian Muslims in the current political and social climate?”
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Methodological Approach

Undertaking this study has introduced me to the wide-ranging concepts of research and the numerous research methodologies and frameworks that can be utilised with the academic inquiry I wished to undertake. After careful examination and consideration, I have adopted a generic qualitative lens. Generic qualitative inquiry has been identified by some researchers, such as Kennedy (2016), as a research framework which, “By virtue of its lack of allegiance to any particular methodology, can leave the novice researcher without a clear starting point” (Kennedy, 2016, p. 1369), and without a philosophical viewpoint that requires clear definition of the guiding set of beliefs, fundamental to the qualitative inquiry.

Caelli, Ray and Mill (2003) agreed that generic qualitative inquiry “has no allegiance to a particular methodology or philosophical viewpoint and along with Merriam (2009) asserts that in order to conduct qualitative research, one must lay a conceptual foundation in accordance with one’s view of the world and researchers must examine their conceptual foundation before deciding on a generic approach” (Kennedy, 2016, p. 1371).

Generic qualitative approaches to research gained momentum in the 21st century and this methodology offers researchers a different perspective to critical inquiry than the more traditional methods of qualitative research, which are more often used.

Kahlke (2014) explains that the variances in qualitative research have necessitated a more generic response to research inquiry as opposed to concentrating on a single traditional approach. He maintains generic qualitative research can be divided into two categories, ‘interpretive description’ and ‘descriptive qualitative’ research, and further explains that these categories may be better suited for questions that do not fit neatly into a single established methodology (Kahlke, 2014. p. 2).

My overarching decision to adopt a generic qualitative inquiry was guided by the philosophical viewpoint described by Kennedy (2016), who argues that a generic qualitative
approach “allows the researcher to create knowledge through subjective analysis of participants, in a naturalistic setting, by embracing a methodology without limitations, which in effect places the researcher at a point in the continuum of knowing” (Kennedy, 2016, p. 5). It is proposed by the researcher Klagge (2018) that this concept surrounding the continuum of knowing and the underlying continuum of epistemologies, informs and supports all levels of knowledge and places the researcher in a position where they are open to exploring what is known and unknown within the phenomena under inquiry. He further asserts that it is imperative that the researcher determines an epistemological position, which they require in the effort to seek their data, as the questions asked, or the observations made will be determined on what epistemological position the researcher is standing upon to establish their knowledge base. This in turn, Klagge proposes, will validate the assertions made and determine if that knowledge base covers all the assertions.

Generic qualitative inquiry is predominately based on the researcher investigating “the subjective opinions, attitudes, beliefs or reflections of the subject’s experiences, of things in the outer world” (Percy, Kostere & Kostere, 2016, p. 78). Therefore, it is important that the researcher investigating the subjective opinion of the participants determine how they made sense of an experience and what meanings they attributed to the specific phenomena under investigation. Caelli, Ray and Mill (2003) argue that generic qualitative inquiry must be much more than just capturing participants’ opinions, beliefs, and attitudes, as these can be measured in a quantitative study. Furthermore, it is claimed, the inquiry must possess “a methodological underpinning to prevent it from being a diluted effort wherein methods used are not congruent with an assumed methodology” (Kennedy, 2016, p. 1370). Merriam (2009) emphasises this point further by declaring that it is essential for the researcher to lay a conceptual foundation in accordance with one’s view of the world and to examine that conceptual foundation prior to deciding on a generic approach. Having regard to the above arguments, a generic qualitative approach was used to allow data to be collected during structured interviews with participants
and established within ‘natural settings’ of their choice, where the analysis of their experiences was understood through the interpretive lens and the world view held by both the interviewee and the researcher, to provide the essential data and rigor for this study.

Although it is acknowledged that structured interviews as a research method can be rigid, I was also mindful that structured interviews would reduce the likelihood of interviewer bias, by removing interviewer judgment and allow for consistency in methodology, as well as in breadth of information gathered from each participant (Patton, 2002). By incorporating open questions into these interviews, this allowed participants to tell their lived experiences, and this method was considered the most appropriate for this research.

The conceptual methodological framework utilised to underpin this generic qualitative research and to form the foundations in which to establish the appropriate research methods; to collect, assemble and evaluate all data gathered, was determined to be the theoretical concept of phenomenology. The philosophical viewpoint of phenomenology was determined as the most suitable to underpin this generic qualitative approach, as it would form the most suitable foundation research rules, which would provide the greatest data and rigor for this specific research. The benefits of a phenomenological approach are explained in detail by Moran (2000), who in his extensive research of the phenomenological discipline over the last century, highlights:

In general, it (phenomenology) never developed a set of dogmas or sedimented into a system. It claims, first and foremost, to be a radical way of doing philosophy, a practice rather than a system. Phenomenology is best understood as a radical, anti-traditional style of philosophising, which emphasises the attempt to get to the truth of matters, to describe phenomena, in the broadest sense as whatever appears in the manner in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer. As such, a phenomenological approach is to seek to avoid all misconstructions and impositions placed on experience in advance, whether these are drawn from religious or cultural
traditions, from everyday common sense, or, indeed, from science itself. Explanations are not to be imposed before the phenomena have been understood from within. (Moran, 2000, p. 4).

Kafle (2011) further explains the benefits of phenomenology within research and describes how the researcher should attempt to understand the lived experiences of the participants and to understand the ontological nature of the phenomenon under inquiry, while learning to ‘see’ pre-reflective, taken-for granted, and essential understandings through the lens of their always already pre- understandings and prejudices (Kafle, 2011, p. 188). Finlay (2009) proposes that the aim of all phenomenology theorists is “the study of phenomena: their nature and meanings. The focus is on the way things appear to us through experience or in our consciousness where the phenomenological researcher aims to provide a rich textured description of lived experience” (Finlay, 2009, p. 1). In this research, I aimed to understand the lived experiences of the participants, through a phenomenological understanding of the stories the participants in this research related, I gained a philosophical viewpoint of meaning that the participants contributed to their stories, the constructs that influenced this meaning, and how they made sense of events surrounding their lived experiences. To remain consciously objective and unbiased through this research, I allowed the participants lived experiences and formed opinions to be captured within the phenomenological viewpoint by dismissing how things discussed probably are and instead concentrated solely on how they are experienced.

The use of phenomenology in this research was further underpinned by the application of an interpretive analysis, whereby I made a conscious decision to observe and examine how my own interpretations of the phenomenon under examination impacts on the data obtained from these participants. How the meanings from the participants answers to the questions asked, would not only be determined by their own interpretation of meaning, or by the context in which their opinions were formed, but also how my own interpretations could impact on these meanings. According to Grix (2004, p. 83) “researchers are inextricably part of the social reality being researched, i.e. they are not ‘detached’ from the subject they are studying”. The
most fundamental objective of interpretive analysis, which was considered in this research, is “not to discover a universal truth but to try and understand the interpretations of individuals about the social phenomena they interact with” (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016, p. 55).

Participants

To recruit the appropriate participants for this research, a snowball sampling technique was applied. Great difficulty was encountered initially to source participants, and despite many failed promises by some recognised Muslim associations and networks, it became apparent to me, that my position as a police officer may have been a major factor in this reluctance. This mistrust of police by Muslim communities, possibly due to the perceived targeting of Muslims, because of current global terrorism events, is supported by the findings of many researchers, including Choudhury and Fenwick (2011) and Silk (2010). In their research they highlight the importance of police rebuilding this trust with a disconnected community, who may feel aggrieved by police and security agents, due to the actions of these government services aimed against them. Fortunately, due to networks within the WA Police Community Engagement Division, and the trust that they had gained with sectors of the Muslim community, the first few participants were recruited, and then the snowball sampling occurred naturally. Participant recruitment occurred until saturation was met, and no new information was being yielded. Dworkin (2012) cites the importance of how to determine saturation in qualitative studies and proposes that true saturation is met when the quality of the data, the scope of the study and the amount of useful information received is at a point where the phenomena under inquiry is acutely understood by the researcher.

The final sample consisted of 20 participants; 9 females and 11 males. The mean ages of these participants were 34 years for the female participants and 38 years for the male participants, the majority of whom were employed full time in both professional and semi-professional occupations. All were self-proclaimed Muslims, who were recognised within their Muslim community, and with the vast majority claiming to be practicing Muslims.
Significant cultural differences existed, as many Muslim participants were from different parts of the world (i.e., Malaysia, Maldives, South Africa, Kenya, Lebanon, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Sudan, Indonesia, Somalia, Egypt, New Zealand and Australia). Although many of the Muslim practices and teachings were similar, some cultural differences existed, as Muslims are not a homogenous group. The vast majority (18 of the 20 participants) had also been living in Australia for several years or more, which gave them a good understanding of the Australian culture and the traditional Australian way of life.

**Materials**

The primary material incorporated in this research was a structured interview schedule. Given the breadth of experiences captured within research questions (i.e., social and political), questions were organised around the categories addressed in the environmental scanning framework. This framework captures the Socio-cultural (demographics, culture, faith, family and friends’ dynamics, values), Technological, (ecological and environment factors - use of technology), Economic (cost and capital – employment/unemployment, living standards), and Political (influence of government laws, levels and standards of public service elements that impacted on these participants’ lives). Through this framework I was able to examine their experiences within these domains and capture the breadth of data required to address the research question.

The STEP framework utilised was a micro derivative of the more common business environment scanning process PETSLE (Political, Economic, Technology, Social, Legal, Environmental) developed by Aguiar (1967), who included in his scan the additional elements of Legal and Environment to determine if the organisation was conforming to these factors, which he attributed to ensuring the success of their business or project. During the early 1970s, pioneering business futurist, Arnold Brown, commenced to apply the STEP framework into environmental scanning of organisations, and incorporated elements of the environmental and legal aspects within the social and political elements, thus simplifying this framework and
Voros (2001), further developed the STEP framework during the early 21st century and identified that environmental scanning was not only beneficial for organisations but was also suited for gaining a greater understanding of individuals’ lived experiences through qualitative research. He proposes that research of both individuals and organisations is regularly undertaken through the “perceptual filters of the researcher utilising predominately pre-conscious conditioners of what we see and that any framework which helps to expand our range of perceptions may help us to become more attuned to more of the world out there” (Voros, 2001, p. 3).

Voros (2001) also proposed that the use of an environmental scanning framework utilises a broader and deeper view of the world, which assists to expand the exploration of the inquiry and to understand the different ways of thinking, for both the inquirer and the subject to achieve this. This model which is also referred to as the integral approach to view the world, “allows for reflection on how the perceptual filters we all possess, filters our large tracts of the world and determines what we see and don’t see. In understanding this we can take steps to consciously widen and deepen our scanning frame” (Voros, 2001, p. 3). This process was deemed to be a practical approach to enable the researcher to understand not only what the perceptions of the subject are, but also to gain an understanding of the context in which that understanding was formed. Further, it allows the researcher to become aware of the influences of culture, norms, and values, and more importantly the experiences that create the filters of what we come to understand for both the researcher and the participant. Although this approach is a legitimate qualitative research method, it was employed in this research as a means of organising and framing interview questions.

Within this structured interview, questions were structured in accordance with the STEP framework, which allowed the participant to explain their lived experiences in their own words, and to explain the context in which they came to form that meaning. This interviewing
technique enabled further probing of questions if clarity was required, to allow the researcher to obtain a more descriptive meaning of the true nature of the experiences explained by the participants.

The questions themselves were determined by identifying the major themes of impacts on emerging communities and predominately other Muslim communities within Australia and identified and established within existing literature that was researched for this inquiry.

Questions asked of the participants were categorised under each of the STEP components as indicated below:

**Socio-Cultural:**

- Living standards
- Lifestyle in Western Australia
- Laws in Australia that impacted on participants’ day to day living
- International Islamic caused terrorism events and the impact on participants
- Media portrayal of Muslims in WA
- Friendship groups
- Workplace relations
- Socialising outside of home

**Technological:**

- Engagement with social media
- Social media portrayal of Muslims
- Social media and terrorism
- Experiences with mass media

**Economic:**

- Work and school environment
- Treatment within work/school environment
- Capital and economic mobility opportunities
Political

• Perceptions of current counter-terrorism legislation
• Experiences with introduced laws and policies within Australia
• Shari’ah law implications on western democracy
• Enhanced screening practices at airports etc
• Anti-Muslim and racist political agendas within Australia

The developed questions under this STEP framework were tested with trusted and reliable Muslim colleagues, to ensure questions posed would not be disrespectful or disparaging to the Muslim faith or culture, or too sensitive for participants.

Procedure

To obtain participants for this research, contact was initially made with respected WA Muslim organisations and a letter explaining the purpose of this research forwarded to them. After a reluctance to be involved by these organisations, the researcher reached out to contacts within the WA Police who were associated with other WA Muslim organisations and associations. This snowballing technique proved successful and several participants contacted the researcher by phone or by email and informed him of their desire to participate.

An information letter describing the nature and purpose of the research was prepared for participants, as was a participant consent form (refer Appendices A and B). Interviews were recorded using an MP3 player. Qualitative data analysis software NVivo 11 was utilised to capture and code all data and establish themes.

The interviews were scheduled with the participants through email correspondence where the purpose of the interview was explained and the choice of being interviewed via telephone or in person was offered. In total, 11 participants were interviewed in person whilst the remaining nine chose to be interviewed via telephone for convenience purposes such as distance and time constraints. Interviews lasted approximately one hour.

The participants were asked for their permission to record the interviews with a digital recorder, to which ten agreed, whilst the other ten declined for personal reasons. With each
interview, notes were taken, more extensively where the interview was not recorded, which were then typed onto a computer as soon as practicable to protect the prosperity of the information obtained and to record the data, whist still fresh. The digitally recorded interviews were downloaded as MP3 files, and stored on a secure computer drive.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim to enable data analysis incorporating NVivo 11.

**Data Analysis**

A generic qualitative approach underpinned by a phenomenological theoretical foundation was utilised to analyse all data obtained within this research. This approach allowed for an effective means to capture the themes and categories required for a rigorous analysis, and to provide empirical evidence for the assumptions and findings reported.

To ensure rigor and the validity of research findings, a robust data analysis strategy is required. The following process, articulated by Shaw (2013, pp. 37-38), provided a very reliable step by step process that allowed for these requirements to be met:

1. Review and become familiar with the transcribed interviews. This step includes highlighting information that appears to be meaningful.
2. Review the highlighted information to determine relevance to the research questions.
3. Discard data considered non-relevant to the research question but keep on file for later re-evaluation.
4. Assign each data item a descriptive code.
5. Cluster items that appear to be connected or related in some way as themes/patterns begin to emerge. The words used to describe these patterns are no longer the participant’s, but the researchers.
6. Identify data items that demonstrate a specific pattern (this may include direct quotes).
7. Explore patterns for overarching themes.
8. Arrange themes in a type of matrix according to their corresponding supporting patterns. The matrix will include descriptors from Step 4.

9. Formulate a structured statement of each participant’s experience. This step will include each theme’s scope and substance.

10. Combine the analysis of data that are consistent across the participant’s, for each participant, and blend them into a composite analysis of the data collected regarding the research question.

11. Present data as a descriptive summary that includes pre-existing, emergent and overarching themes, which may include illustrative quotes.

12. Re-listen to the original interviews to determine if there was anything new to be gained from hearing them after completing the analysis, or to determine if anything was left out.

In this research, the process of data analysis incorporated the theoretical concept of phenomenology, whereby the data obtained was the captured narratives of the participants involved. By capturing their stories and opinions the researcher was able to understand their consciousness, thoughts, and experiences which in turn created their values, purposes, emotions, and relationships that created the context of meaning in which to explain the phenomenon under inquiry.

To capture these narratives and the individual meanings and the context in which each participant contributed to them, the data analysis software NVivo11 was utilised. This included ensuring that the interviews were transcribed and then rechecked again for accuracy. During this process, each transcript became familiar and general themes of commonality became identifiable. The second phase involved a review of the episodes and experiences as explained by the participants during the interviews and marking the phrases and sentences that seemed the most meaningful to them. Phase three involved comparing these meaningful phrases and sentences to the research question and disregarding any data that was deemed
surplus or not meaningful to the research inquiry. This information was not discarded however as further review of these transcripts may identify this information as useful at a later stage. In Phase four, the information, phrases and sentences that were identified as useful for the inquiry from the transcripts were categorised into descriptive codes and nodes for the benefit of identifying similar and familiar themes for further examination and evaluation. Phase five involved the clustering of related themes that were identified as being connected to each other due to similar phrases or sentences and similar impact of experiences. Phase six involved recording direct quotes from the interviews that demonstrated a coalition to each other and which identified similar patterns of experiences and impact. Phase seven then explored the patterns of overarching themes and similar experiences that addressed the inquiry under investigation and arranged these into a matrix, to record corresponding patterns and themes. Phase eight involved writing a brief review of each interview that depicted the identified substance of each theme identified. The final phase, phase nine involved combining the work of all the phases mentioned above and combining them into a composite synthesis of the data collected that related to the inquiry under investigation. This information was then presented within a descriptive summary that explained how the research question was answered and highlighted any similarities with the phenomenon explored.

Ethics approval for this research was obtained from the Edith Cowan University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). During the conduct of this research, various ethical issues were considered, and two ethical considerations were at the forefront when deciphering and coding the information received from the participants. These ethical considerations were carefully reviewed so as not, to produce any bias into the findings of this research. The first ethical consideration was this research targeted a group that may already perceive themselves as being targeted. However, the benefits of the research findings to the Muslim community, particularly for the Western Australian Muslim community, was seen to outweigh the potential for any harm. My dual role as a researcher and as a police officer was the second ethical consideration. To ensure that there would be minimum conflict between
these two roles, I advised the participants at the onset that I was a sworn police officer and that I was duty bound to report on any matter that constituted a serious crime and that I was also required to act upon any evidence that would identify individuals engaging in any serious crime or who threatened community safety. To ensure anonymity of individuals in this category, I requested that participants did not disclose names to me or provide any identifiable feature, so I could remain in the single role of a researcher, whilst maintaining my obligations as a police officer.

To comply with the ethical standards and requirements for this study all participants read and signed a consent form prior to the interview, which included the right to decline participation in the study or withdraw at any stage if they so wished. Anonymity was guaranteed by ensuring all participants’ names or any other identifiable feature were not mentioned in the research paper and all interview forms and other collected information were stored in a locked safe and all information collected via email was password protected.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The findings of this research identified several themes that are presented and interpreted in accordance with the STEP framework. These themes characterise the experiences of Western Australian (WA) Muslims within the current political and social climate.

Socio-Cultural

Integration into Western Australia

Many of the participants described their overall satisfaction with the living standards in WA and highlighted education, healthcare, welfare, and government services as of a much higher quality and standard from where they originated. This experience is consistent with findings outlined within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Better Life Index Report (Australian Life-style Report, 2017). This report claims that Australia performs well across the different well-being dimensions relative to other OECD countries and that migrants living in Australia (defined as people now living in Australia, which is a different country from the one in which they were born), fare well in Australia. Findings from my research were consistent with the research findings of the OECD who, through the same Australian Life-style Report, identified that migrants have a relatively good situation regarding educational attainment, employment and in-work poverty compared to other countries, and this can be considered as one of the main reasons they wish to move to Australia with their families.

This research also showed that migrants in Australia are more likely to have similar well-being outcomes (four out of the five selected well-being indicators) to the Australian-born population in Australia; however, “they are less likely than native-born to report having someone to count on for help” (2017, p. 5). This was also well evidenced in participant narratives. For example, some participants indicated:
People are just disconnected from each other. There is no friendship in Australia, real friendship! There is no appreciation for anything you do. (M6)

Financially the lifestyle is better here. Personal identity is an issue here. We live in a society where discrimination and racism is so high that personal identity is lacking. (F4)

Participants spoke of their efforts for inclusion and their own personal wishes to become a part of the Australian fabric (i.e., culture and lifestyle). However, several of them related stories that detailed the challenges that they faced in this endeavour and how their full integration and acceptance was being hindered by anti-migration and anti-Muslim sentiment, which in some instances was causing a negative impact on their current living standards. Craig (2015), in his examination of migrants who had integrated into the European Union (EU) member states, highlighted the significant challenges that some of these migrants faced with the anti-immigration sentiment that existed within each state and the social and political barriers that Muslim migrants in particular faced to integrate fully with the host country. Through the analysis of a series of working papers to explore this phenomenon, Craig (2015) identified a number of factors which facilitated or impeded the integration of migrants in relation to a country and more specifically the local communities or neighbourhoods to which they had moved. He identified that in nearly all instances of migration the relationship between the welfare state, economic and social policy and immigration policy was of significance, to determine settlement and a sense of belonging within communities.

In Australia, the Federal Government’s Department of Home Affairs manages and operates the Australian Migration Program, which is designed to plan the permanent migration of people into Australia who meet the essential criteria designed to serve Australia’s interests. The program specifies that “each migrant brings costs and benefits to Australia which has to be balanced” (Department of Home Affairs: The Migration Program, 2018, p. 1) and, whilst there is no set of criteria that makes an ideal migrant, “many factors influence the likelihood
of successful settlement for a migrant. This includes English language ability, age, level of education, employment, time spent in Australia and family connections” (Productivity Commission Inquiry Report, Migrant Intake into Australia No 77, 2016, p. 11).

Three participants in this research arrived in Australia as new migrants under the Australia Refugee and Humanitarian Program, which catered for citizens of war-torn states or who were forcibly displaced by persecution, conflict, and violence and/or human rights violations. Their integration into Australia was via refugee camps within other countries and this provided them with an outlook that a country like Australia would offer them safety and security and afford them an opportunity to make a comfortable and enjoyable life within its borders. These participant narratives suggested that this dream had not been totally fulfilled, as although they have a better standard of life, they believed a sense of belonging is still not present and there exists a feeling, through public discourse (particularly western media), that many Australians do not actually want them here.

There is empirical evidence to suggest that many Australians do not want an increase in migration intake and recent surveys by the Australian Population Research Institute (2017) reveal that 54 per cent of voters wanted the levels of migration reduced. This is despite the high number of left-wing orientated politicians and academics who publicly promote for an increase in migration. This survey also identified that two thirds of voters think that people who question high migration are sometimes thought of as racist and a large percentage believe that this accusation is unfair, because very few of them are actually racist (Betts, 2018). These accusations, it is claimed, are used to constrict free-speech on immigration matters, and causes the call for the halt of migration to be labelled in some arenas as hate speech or anti-immigration speech (by the moral guardians of migration), or creates a situation whereby voters become too scared to make any comment on migration due to the power of these guardians and the fear of being labelled as a racist. This has created a situation according to Betts (2018) where no discourse or debate occurs. Whilst the authors of these reports agree that these so called ‘guardians’ are right to take a strong stand against racism; they also believe
it is wrong to see racism where it does not exist. They propose that “the problem lies in the moral reflex that equates discontent about high migration with racism. The silence this promotes does more than inhibit democratic reform, it gives comfort to the growth lobby, who profit from immigration debate while leaving the silenced majority to pay the costs” (Betts, 2018, p. 6).

Therefore, it is not surprising that many Muslim migrants feel disengaged from the host country (i.e., Australia) or believe that they cannot easily integrate, as the unspoken but visible indicators may exist that these migrants are not actually wanted in the community. Overall, most participants in this research described being grateful that they live in WA and enjoy the standard of living they experience. However, many participants described experiencing feelings of exclusion from the main population and believed that Islam as a religion, and Muslims as the followers of that religion, are still viewed with suspicion by the main Australian population.

The impact of Anti-Terror Laws and Security Measures

Participants indicated that they and many other WA Muslims perceive the recently introduced anti-terrorism legislation to only be directed at Muslims, and that this gives the impression that all Muslims are held under suspicion by Australian authorities and the mainstream Australian public. This is even though the legislation was intended to protect Australia from terrorism more generally. These participants propose that not only is this legislation directed towards Muslims in its intent (enactment), but security agents and police are targeting them specifically within their application of this legislation.

Despite this perception, by the majority of the participants interviewed in this study, who held the view that they understood the laws introduced into Australia to combat terrorism, very few could actually describe or name any specific law or report on any particular legislation that was directly aimed at reducing the threat of terrorism in Australia. Furthermore, no participant could nominate any specific rule or policy which directly restricted freedom of movements for Muslims by its application. This was not considered unusual by the researcher, who as a
veteran police officer understood that many sectors of the Australian community (including non-Muslims) do not have a detailed understanding of the many written laws of the land, particularly if they have not been involved with police or the legal system. This situation is supported by findings within the 2012 report of Community Law Australia which is a coalition of national community legal centre bodies (2000 in total) who claim that not only is “the law in Australia unaffordable and out of reach of most Australians, but that it is also extremely complex and an arena where the average layperson needs legal assistance to navigate” (Community Law Australia, 2012, p. 3).

Therefore, despite being unable to evidence any specific legislation, law, or policy which directly targets Muslims, most participants still perceive that these laws were introduced to target Muslims; that only Muslims are impacted by the introduction of these laws; and that the law-makers of Australia believe only Muslims to be terrorists. This perspective is captured in the following narratives by participants:

*I believe Islamic groups and the Muslim community are targeted. When you read the news, it is always Muslims who are getting charged with anti-terrorist offences, yet it is obvious that some right-wing people are causing trouble but are not getting charged the same.* (M5)

*I think the laws are definitely targeting Muslims. How many non-Muslims have had their homes raided or been arrested without charge? None I think.* (M11)

The consensus by many of these participants, that only Muslims are targeted by the introduction of anti-terrorism legislation within Australia, is not a new concept. Williams (2011), in his study of Australia’s current Federal, state and territory statute books, identified that “since September 2001, there have been 350 instances of laws that arguably encroach upon the rights and freedoms essential to maintain a healthy democracy” and that specific groups in particular, maybe the target of these explicit laws introduced into Australia (Williams, 2011, p. 19). Williams further suggests that despite the strong historical aspects of
democracy within Australia and the political intent to “uphold the rights, freedoms and privileges necessary for a healthy democracy, there is also a history of Australia abrogating the rights of certain minorities.” (Williams, 2011, pp. 20-21). Williams also claims that there is a strong argument that the many anti-terror laws passed in Australia since 9/11 [82 at the time of submission of this dissertation], in response to the threat of terrorism, has created a situation where many basic human rights and rights of freedom appear to have been disregarded or completely ignored.

Many participants also described being adversely impacted by the screening practices and arrangements that have emanated from these introduced anti-terrorism laws and policies. The following participant narratives describe some of the circumstances they encounter when entering or exiting Australian airports:

*My friend’s husband is from Saudi and he complains that he gets stopped many times. He is a permanent resident, but he is still treated like he is suspicious. He just came back a few weeks ago and my friend told me he’s not happy for being stopped. They even ask him to hand over his mobile, you know to look at his private posts.* (F3)

*When I came here to settle down in Australia, they took me into a room because I had different sim cards for phones. Just for small phones. In the Middle East it is normal to have several phones and numbers. They took my phones inside to make security checks because I came from the Middle East. They told me it was because of the Middle East and with what was going on. And that is correct, they should do that.* (M6)

*My mother and I have been stopped numerous times at the airport and searched because she wears the scarf and Western women walked straight through. My girls do not wear their scarves going through airports for that reason and they never get stopped for a search.* (F9)
I was working in the Emirates on contract and when I returned to Perth my family and I were subjected to a ridiculous search that was completely based on the fact that we were Muslims. We had every inch of our luggage and personal belongings searched and at one point my very young son had his water bottle taken off him and the female searching held the bottle out from her and unscrewed the lid like it was going to explode. (F6)

Not me. But my wife and mother have because of wearing a scarf. They are screened more. But only in Australia not in Dubai or Malaysia. It annoys me that Muslims are screened more but I understand security have a job to do. (M10)

There was an evident frustration identified when interviewing many of these participants who felt that because they were Muslims, they were being openly and actively targeted by airport security. This active targeting of Muslims is supported by several research studies conducted by Hassan and Martin (2015) who focused on Islamophobia in Australia. This body of research concluded that although there is only a small percentage of the Australian population that is Islamophobic, there remains a perception by a large percentage of the population that a terrorist attack in Australia is likely and that it will be caused by Muslims. Given this degree of community fear, and the desire to ensure the safety of all Australian residents, the police, security agencies and customs have responded by increasing security and screenings at major custom points such as airports. Combined with community perceptions, it is very possible that an unconscious bias exists towards overtly identifiable Muslims and that they will be the most likely candidates for screening.

As the following narratives show, other participants were more accepting of the screening processes in WA and felt differently about the perception of being targeted:

Last year we went overseas and after going through the check-outs they asked my youngest Son to step aside and they said for security reasons we have to check him. I was a little bit worried as he is the youngest in the family. I can always understand that for the safety of everyone there has to be this checking. But when I saw a family behind us
who looked Australian, they had white skin, sorry to say this but this is reality and the security also checked their youngest member I knew we were not being targeted. But additional security has impacted on everyone. It must be done to keep everyone safe. (M7)

It has happened to me many times in my professional career, but I am OK with that. I have been questioned, particularly since I am a Muslim male who has travelled around the world and it is a risky business now. They are always looking at the person to determine what they are up to too. These officers are trained to do that and keep a look out for Muslim terrorists. I am never annoyed personally as they have a job to do and I am OK with that. (M2)

Participants described the impact of wearing overt Muslim clothing, or openly practising their religious or cultural rituals and customs within Australia. Open displays of religious beliefs and customs varied, with several positive experiences described, as articulated by the following participant:

*I don’t hide, I am proud of being a Muslim. It is only a starting point declaring that you are a Muslim, you also need to talk about the religion, explain the customs and the set of beliefs that represent us. Have respect for tradition and show discipline and have confidence in your Muslim identity. I pray all the time; I carry my prayer mat with me everywhere and my work provides time for me to pray. This creates discussions about Islam in my workplace and I am happy to educate others.* (M3)

However, not all experiences were positive, as some participants related stories of how they had difficulties integrating into workplaces, or within the community in general, due to their cultural dress, or the fact that they were Muslims. As some participants articulated:

*In some places you feel afraid to practice. You don’t know who will come and kick you. In the universities you are safe, but if you are in some place like the Carousel and the time comes for you to practice one of the prayers, you have to go outside to your car or*
private area. What makes it unsafe is people’s comments, people’s misunderstanding. (M6)

Reluctant to declare because of the back-lash. I do not deny my faith, but I do not wear it as a badge either. (M5)

There were times in the past where I did try to blend in more. By not wearing black clothing (which is seen as oppression) and by tucking my scarf within my clothes, so it did not look as obvious. (F6)

The essential roles that are manifested by the Islamic doctrine, in shaping the daily lives of Muslims and which cover the overarching themes of self, identity and the practice of specific Islamic rituals, cannot be underestimated, as this is of the most prevalent importance to Muslims, who wish to preserve and maintain their faith. It is with great reluctance and consternation then that many Muslims feel they are prevented from displaying this practice or feel threatened or frightened if they do so. This fear to practice the Muslim religion has been identified in research as being of a great concern to many Muslims living in Western countries. For example, Mansouri, Lobo, Johns and Turner (2017), examined Islamic religiosity in the West to determine the impact of Muslims practicing their religion in multicultural cities and their sense of belonging and political engagement within their host cities. This research highlighted the complexities involved in identifying self, faith and state for Muslim migrants to Australia (Melbourne) and indicted that “significantly the experiences of settlement for young Muslim migrants to Australia is of great importance. Particularly in relation to their ease of ability and opportunity to negotiate a space for their faith in the new environment” (Mansouri, Lobo, Johns, and Turner, 2017, p. 56).

This feeling of exclusiveness by Muslims in Australia is further supported by Yasmeen (2008) who, in studying the self-identity of Muslims within Australia and other Western democracies, identified that literature available on understanding Muslim identities recognises the
importance that specific constructs have on determining the acceptance and inclusion of the Muslim identity. This includes:

“A marginalisation of Muslim immigrants that focuses on their relative lack of upward social and economic mobility, over-crowded or poor housing standards, proportionately higher unemployment rates, and the Islamophobia as the context in which Muslims live as citizens in these countries”. (2008, p. 15).

The perceptions portrayed by the participants in this research are consistent with the concerns of their eastern state’s counterparts, and with many other Muslims who reside in Western democracies, or where Islam is not the dominant religion. The findings of this body of research suggests that Muslims feel a level of disengagement from their host communities, due to religious differences, and many believe that they have been targeted and/or discriminated against because of their religion, or because of their easily identifiable Muslim culture, conduct and dress. This is consistent with the findings of other researchers, including Hassan and Martin (2015) and Mansouri, Lobo, Johns and Turner (2017), who all allude to the escalation of Islamophobia in Australia which, they claim, has become a real factor, and in some circumstances an unfortunate reality for some Muslim communities living within this country.

**Social Disharmony and Marginalisation**

Several of the participants described experiencing a significant degree of anti-Muslim sentiment following global Islamic-caused terrorist attacks. One participant described her experience across time:

*After 9/11 it had a major impact on me as I was regularly and continually abused by motorists and pedestrians as they went past me. Telling me to go back to my country, even though I am Australian.*

*After 9/11 there was the Iraq wars and we saw then President Bush declare an ‘us and them’ philosophy that squarely placed the blame for all atrocities at the feet of Muslims.*
Soon afterwards there were many counter-terrorism laws that were introduced in quick succession and then came even more racist attacks and verbal abuse.

One incident I can relate involves an Old Man who would ride his bicycle past almost daily and spit on our front door handle. I would have to wash it off with disinfectant.

One day he was at our front door and we opened it up to walk out not realising he was there. He actually swung a punch at my oldest daughter who was around 8 years old at the time.

We would have hoons (mostly young white males) driving past who would slow down to abuse us or pretended to drive at us indicating they wanted to run us over. (F6)

Given these types of experiences, several participants were of the view that Western Australians hold a negative view of Muslims, predominately because of the Islamic-caused terrorist attacks that occur around the world. These are attacks which have no known connection to Muslims residing in Australia. The participants in this research described themselves as having demonstrated that they are law abiding citizens of this country, who publicly condemn the actions of these Islamic terrorist and radicals.

Some participants did not describe directly experiencing adverse reactions to world events or did not believe that they had been directly targeted because of Islamic-caused terrorist attacks. However, they still feared the potential for this to occur. As one participant articulated:

*Up to now no. But as I said earlier, I have a fear in my head. A fear that I or my Children will be attacked because we are Muslims and the media attention on Muslims.*

*Because we are humans some people might believe what they see or read in the media and act on that information.* (M7)

Extensive literature including the research of Hamed Hosseini and Chafic (2016) and Rane and Abdalla (2008) has highlighted a growing concern surrounding a specific discourse
that now exists within the Australian community. A discourse, they claim, which is created by the application of the current legislation of Australia to combat terrorism and the social disharmony influenced by many of the main Western media outlets, who link Islam and all Muslims with the terrorist attacks that have occurred abroad. This in turn, they allude to, creates a fear by mainstream Australians, whereby they come to believe that Muslims will instigate terrorist attacks here in Australia, and as such are a direct threat to the safety and wellbeing of all Australians.

Research literature surrounding the factors of Islamophobia has confirmed that media broadcasts are a primary source of information for the majority of Australians, and this media coverage has the propensity to fuel community fear of Muslims and to apportion blame on them for attacks that are beyond their control (Yasmeen, 2008). This in turn, it is claimed by some researchers, can cause Muslims to be targeted and made scapegoats for the atrocities that are caused by unknown and unrelated elements, who ultimately may remain unconnected and disassociated to them (Rane and Abdallah, 2008). Briskman and Latham (2017) have detailed in their broad study of Islamophobia in Australia (2014-2016), the extent to which racist ideologies exist in Australia and which are arguably aimed predominately at Muslims. This Islamophobia sentiment has grown in Australia with the increased popularity of political parties such as Pauline Hanson’s anti-Muslim ‘One Nation Party’ and the right-wing ‘Reclaim Australia’ Party, who regularly link Islam with terrorism and use this dogma as the main rationale to stop Muslim immigration into Australia. As cited in the report of Briskman and Latham (2017), Jeremy Hillman, a political advisor for former Prime Ministers Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard, claims that when prejudiced views are articulated by those in high office, they gain a degree of social currency and legitimacy that perpetuates them further.

This is further evidenced in the research of Poynting and Briskman (2018), who in response to an article written in the ‘Australian’ newspaper, concerning the speech given by the Australian Citizenship Minister, Alan Tudge, to a closed meeting of the Australian / UK Leadership forum in London (2018), cite how this Minister used very strong stereotyped
language to call for a stronger response to defend western culture values against cultures that may oppose these values. These authors claim that this rhetoric, by a senior Minister, highlights the ‘emblematic manner in which an anti-Muslim partnership exists between government and media which is now firmly in place and undisguised’. These researchers claim in their research that there is a ‘significant ideological and political relationships between extreme right-wing groups and politicians and media outlets that would claim liberal respectability’. (Poynting and Briskman, 2018, pp. 1 -2).

Researchers Hosseini and Chafic (2016), who have conducted studies on the Australian Muslim Youth Identity since the 1980s, revealed an interest in the contemporary issues encountered by Muslim youth at particular points in time. They have identified that in the 1980’s these studies recorded a concern for socio-economic integration and settlement related issues. In the 1990’s these studies reflected an interest in experiences of discrimination, and post 9/11 the study was on experiences of racism and discrimination encountered by young Muslims because of terrorist attacks. Also evident in this study, is the adaptation of young Muslims living in Australia, amid negative media and political constructions of Australian Muslims as questionable citizens, who are vulnerable to extremism (Hosseini & Chafic, 2016, p. 4).

Social disharmony was described by many participants as being the consequence of media coverage. Although most participants described adverse feelings concerning the reporting of Islam by the Western media (Including Australia media), some proposed that while the Western media has reported incorrect facts concerning Islam and Muslims in the past, they were now becoming better informed and have started reporting more accurately. Narratives explaining this variance are provided below:

*I think so. The media should instead of blaming Islam every time there is an attack, they should blame the Individuals involved. I think it is how the media use it. You know things like the Halal, Pauline Hanson what she says about Halal is totally wrong.*
You know in Katanning there is a Butcher shop that sells Halal meat and the poor fella has gone through hell. You Know people coming up to him and saying we will not buy your meat. He’s an Aussie bloke. It’s how they (media) portray, every time they cover, they blame the religion, rather than what is actually happening or what happened. (F4)

Not so much now, but a few years ago it was. It seemed every attack occurring in the world the Muslims were blamed for. Even lone gunman shootings in America which were crazy white men. (F9)

Chopra (2015) also discusses the climate of Islamophobia that is perpetuated by the Australian media and some politicians, which, in some instances she proposes, causes Australian Muslims to become demonised by mainstream Australian citizens. Chopra examined multiple angles from which anti-Muslim discourse was created, usually under the guise of codified patriotism, which she claimed has caused some Australians in some instances to enact violence towards Australian Muslims. Chopra has called for the State to be held culpable for this discourse, particularly if journalists are allowed to continue to use biased reporting and if hate-speech by Australian politicians was not addressed adequately by the State.

The participants in this research support this view concerning the negative effect of sensational news reporting by the mass media (Islamophobia) and highlighted the negative responses that they have witnessed or experienced first-hand. However, some participants, described how they are now witnessing a different perspective emerging from within the mass media outlets of Australia. They claim that the reporting of matters surrounding Muslims is now taking on a more informed approach, and that the media is showing a greater understanding of Islamic cultures and the varying differences between moderate and radical Muslim ideologies.
Social Connections and Disconnections

Most of participants (eighteen out of the twenty) in this research indicated that the relationships they have with non-Muslims in a social context is very positive. However, participants felt they had to behave differently towards their non-Muslim friends and colleagues than they did with their fellow Muslims friends. They also stipulated they did not have any concerns in accommodating these differences between their non-Muslim and Muslim friends, as all were accepting and tolerant of the cultural differences and showed respect for these differences. As some participants articulated:

_We are different, but we have a respectful mutual understanding._ (M7)

_All the same. We even make jokes about things that are happening you know. Yeah, all the same._ (F2)

The two participants who did feel a negative impact from social discourse with non-Muslims, indicated that the biggest challenge that they faced was being recognised and appreciated as a Muslim within their former family and social circles. As converted Muslims, they described the reluctance of others to accept them as a Muslim living in Western Australia. As one participant articulated:

_Sometimes a lack of respect for my faith by some. I have family who are non-Muslims and they will expect me to meet them every Christmas or Easter, but they will not come to me during the Muslim festive seasons._ (F7)

As well as social relations, participants also described their work-based experiences. Beside the participants who are currently unemployed, the remainder stated that they worked with or alongside non-Muslims. Even the participants who worked within Muslim colleges, cited having fellow work colleagues who are non-Muslim and who were employed for the specific reason of bringing diversity into their workplaces. This occurred, they claimed, to ensure differing perspectives to their own cultural way of thinking and to offer their students
different learning and cultural perspectives, to adopt the principals of diversity and inclusion. Some participants reported that their relationship with their employer and co-workers was based on mutual respect and that they did not feel they were treated unfairly or different than any other employee.

An exception to this was one participant who was employed primarily because he was a Muslim. His role within his organisation included actively targeting Muslim youth for specialised integration programs. His knowledge and expertise on the varied Muslim cultures meant he was sought to provide advice and counsel in this area. Therefore, he was called upon as a subject matter expert. As the only Muslim employee and as a person hired for this fact, he was proud of his role to assist other Muslims. As this participant articulated:

*I am the only Muslim and was hired to be an advisor for the organisation and to represent the Muslim communities that they are targeting for inclusion. I am treated as a valued member of the team. I self-manage myself but am approached by management when they seek my advice on matters that I am aware of.* (M5)

Some participants did not have positive experiences and described the difficulties they encountered with their employer within the workplace, or within the educational facility they attended, due to their Islamic faith or culture. As some participants described:

*I explain my culture. From my perspective. Sometimes I feel like the centre of attention. It’s kind of sad, I just wanted to fit in be like everyone else. Not be treated as different. You know in groups and things I would be the only Muslim, and everyone would be firing questions at me. I hated that. What I said was my perspective, what If I said the wrong thing or it was taken wrong, would I be labelled as a terrorist.* (F4)

*My old employee treated me different. He told me clearly that you are from the Middle East, you are an Arab and he didn’t like Arabs. I had a case against him in the courts and I won that case.* (M6)
The Islamophobia Register of Australia (https://www.islamophobia.com.au/), which was established to record anecdotal evidence concerning racial abuse and victimisation of Muslims within Australia by fellow Australians, highlights the significant difference in reporting from Muslims of Arabic persuasion, who are distinctly different and easily identifiable from other Muslims. As was cited by participant M6, who is of Arab appearance, he was treated differently to other employees, solely based on his ethnic appearance, regardless of his requests to his employer to cease this unwanted behaviour. This behaviour continued to the point where M6 had no choice but to take legal action. The legal proceedings upheld the view that he was receiving unwarranted and unfavourable treatment from his employer, which was predominately based on his religion and ethnicity and which was deemed to be unlawful.

The Islamophobia Register Committee of Australia propose through their annual reports (since 2014) that this situation is not an infrequent occurrence, and in fact it is such a regular occurrence that it created the need for this Islamophobia Register, to record the high instances of discrimination against Muslims within Australia.

Berger (2018), in her examination of Moroccan Muslims working within the white organisations of the Netherlands, highlighted the challenges that many there faced, to incorporate their identified work practises with their religious practices. By interviewing a number of highly educated Moroccan employees, who were employed within different sectors across the Netherlands, Berger identified that there did exist a polarisation between Muslims and non-Muslims, fuelled predominately by negative media discourse on Muslims within the Netherlands, which articulated an assumed threat that Muslims make to the local workforce, due to their religion and culture. Berger (2018) wrote this article to highlight the challenges faced by many Muslims “working within the white structures and practices of Western European organisations that make up the space in which Muslim employees manoeuvre and work on their Muslim and professional identifies” (Berger, 2018, p. 4). Berger’s study was
important to provide human resource practitioners and leaders the opportunity to understand and conceptualise the structuration theory and practices required within their workforce to allow for diversity and to cater for the differing identity of workers.

Atie, Dunn and Ozalp (2017), in their examination of religiosity, attitudes on diversity and belonging among Australians Muslims, also identified the importance of diversity within the workforces and other social interactions and concentrated their study on the sense of belonging and fit felt by many Sydney Muslims with their Western counterparts. Their research focused on the cross-cultural contact that existed and assessed the influences of religiosity on attitudes and sense of fit with mainstream Australians. The researchers discovered empirical evidence did exist to indicate that Islamophobia, racism, and bigotry towards the Muslim population is occurring within the Australian workplace and society.

The workplace or the education facility that most citizens attend usually makes up a significant proportion of their day, and it is in these areas where the most fundamental forms of social interaction are not only important but essential to succeed or survive. It is within the Australian workplace and education facilities that the varying differences and similarities between people are most evident and where acceptance and respect for culture and faith is not only decreed but also expected and encouraged.

Participants in this study also described their experiences interacting with work colleagues or friends. Experiences for a few were of a positive nature, with these participants stating that they had been approached by work colleagues or friends, who out of a general interest may ask them questions concerning their religion or culture. Participants felt these questions came from a ‘good place’, out of genuine interest and were an attempt to understand and know the participant better.

However, Chopra (2015) described the impact of the Australian mass media on Australian Muslims and in their shaping of negative stereotypes as a result of this attention. Chopra highlights the fear that many Muslims have in discussing their religion or culture with non-Muslims as they cannot always trust the intent. This includes in the workplace. Chopra states:
“As a Cross Cultural Consultant, I am constantly exposed to environments that bring into question the how and why of cultural variance in our society. Specifically, the discussion about Islam and Muslims in Australia is frequently requested, likely owing to existing assumptions and apprehensions. In our current political climate, an escalation in the curiosity about all things Islam has been surpassed only by the vilification of these very things. Such attitudes have required an enormous investment of goodwill from a community that is continuously required to assert its ‘Australian-ness’ at a time when, as a Muslim in this country, you are presumed guilty while practising.” (Chopra, 2015, p. 330).

This feeling of reluctance to engage in conversation concerning Islam was identified in this research and many participants described their reluctance to discuss this topic. Many did not feel the positivity in explaining their personal life or their subjective feelings on their faith or culture to outsiders (non-Muslims). These participants felt this was very private and they did not trust the intent of the person or persons asking them and therefore did not wish to disclose. They spoke of the mistrust to speak to non-Muslims on matters concerning their faith or culture or felt frustrated that this topic was the most popular topic in any given conversation. As some participants articulated:

But I do have issues with some classmates. It is religious issues because sometimes they just cast things that they got into religious perceptions. That can be, how do you say, not upsetting but.... for example, if we have a discussion and there has to be an example it is always about Islam. I did actually tell this to my tutor because it is quite ironic, you are doing Human Rights, and this is how they treat Islam. (F3)

I make it clear that I do not want to discuss world events as I am afraid that if I say the wrong thing, which would only be my opinion - they will judge us all by it. (M1).

This feeling of alienation was not attributed just to non-Muslims as one of the participants who is a converted Muslim, of Western appearance, stated that she felt alienated from other Muslims
who treated her differently based on her Western appearance. She holds the belief that she is not afforded the same status as other Muslims from Arabic, African or Asian States.

Overall, the participants in this study highlighted the negative impact of having to justify or explain their religion or culture to work colleagues, when they felt other diverse groups were not required to do so. Even though several of the participants claimed that they did not mind explaining their religion or culture to work colleagues or friends, the very notion that they felt they needed to, highlights the perception that they (Muslims) are treated different to other Australian workers, which holds both positive and negative connotations for the workplace and for our Australian society. This need for an explanation of Islam or the independent Muslim cultures, plays into the psychology of being considered ‘the others’ within our society and which studies have shown to be a negative consequence for any multicultural society. There are challenges which can exist for Muslims to be recognised equally in the workplace and to be afforded the same courtesies and entitlements as all other Australian workers. Whilst most of the participants in this study claim to be treated equally within their workplace and are accepted by their management and co-workers, others felt alienated from the major workforce and believe they are treated differently and inferior to others.

Participants also described their experiences when using public transport in Western Australia or using open public spaces. Several participants described instances of racism and bigotry, which was aimed at them by the public. As one participant articulated:

*My wife has been insulted on trains. One woman even spat at her once.* (M11)

The Anti-Muslim rhetoric felt by some participants in this study supports previous research that has studied similar human behaviours and indicates how important perceptions are in relation to shaping social cohesion and creating a safe space in public. A recent report by Hassan (2018) highlights the impact of perception on forming meaningful relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims, and how poor perceptions of Muslims by the mainstream population can create a situation where Muslims often remain guarded and feel that they are
continually under scrutiny. This poor perception can also lead Muslims to come to expect poor treatment by non-Muslims, as a natural course of nature. This is supported by the lived experiences of several participants in this research.

*I am a tall man with a big beard and people know I am a Muslim. If I get on a bus, I feel everyone stares at me. And If I sit next to a woman, they feel scared. For this reason, I often stay standing so not to make people uncomfortable.* (M10)

*On the train I do get the looks and stuff. You do get those people who want to sit next to you but don’t want to sit next to you.* (F4)

Most of the participants who described their personal experiences of open racism and bigotry towards them were females who were wearing traditional Muslim scarfs at the time of the abuse, or who were abused because of other Muslim dress attire. The Muslim Women’s Association of Australia was formed to, amongst other things, address this dilemma and to provide Muslim women across Australia with advocacy and engagement support. They also aim to provide further support to Muslim women by providing a philosophy: “To focus on providing Muslim women with the full opportunities to enable them to develop as full individuals with rights and responsibilities as a member of society” (Muslim Women’s Association: 34th Annual Report, 2017, p. 3).

The rationale for the formation of this Muslim women’s association is because historically it has been Muslim women who are subjected to the most bias and harassment in Australia, predominately because they are the most visibility identifiable as Muslims, due to their cultural and religious attire. Some feminist researchers, however, believe that these verbal and physical attacks on Muslim women may also be caused because of their gender, rather than the purpose of their religion or culture. As proposed by D’Souza et al. (2018), gendered hate speech against women has grown extensively in Australia, more so in recent years, to the point that these researchers claim that this gendered hate speech “has become a normalised feature of everyday public discourse that is often aimed at silencing women, and hindering their ability to participate
effectively in civil society” (D’Souza et al., 2008, p. 939). These researchers argue that speeches made in Australia by some controversial politicians and commentators, move beyond the political and religious arguments against Islamic-based ideologies, and become more about the opposition towards a female speaker, and the language used in opposition becomes more aligned to gender hate speech. These researchers propose that as a consequence, female Muslims become targeted even more than male Muslims, due to their gender, as well as because of their Muslim faith and culture. As a consequence, the Muslim Women’s Association of Australia was formed to protect Muslim women from all threats, including this growing anti-female discourse and aims to ensure that Muslim women are allowed every opportunity to be effective participants in Australian society.

Many of the participants in this research, of both genders, described their lived experience of racist or prejudiced behaviour by non-Muslims, and many appeared to simply accept this poor behaviour. This behaviour was described by many participants as being just a normal part of everyday life, for any Muslim residing in Australia and it is to be expected.

**Technological**

**Social Media as a Tool to Spread Discourse and Promote Hate Speech**

Participants described using a variety of social media and online platforms such as Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, Skype, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Snapchat. These platforms, they claim, were typically used for the purposes of work, to keep in contact with family, and for leisure. When discussing their experiences with online and social media platforms, many participants described having witnessed derogatory comments in relation to their faith and culture or having observed hate speech aimed directly at Muslims on Western social media. The negative impact of social media resonated with most of the participants, many of whom now actively avoid certain social media platforms because of this negative impact on them and their families. However, several participants did also describe witnessing a change in
dialogue in some of these social media platforms, whereby the derogatory comments or the hate speech made is now often challenged by non-Muslims in support of Muslims. As some participants articulated:

*Mostly Muslims are labelled as terrorists. The Branding of Islam is not good, and it appears that the media is biased against Islam and have as their priority the intent to promote Islam as evil or bad.* (M3)

*I see silly comments, because people lack the information, as we say in Arabic Information can be the biggest enemy or people who don’t know. So, when anyone comes and attacks and says Muslims are terrorists, this is generalising. You tell them do you know what Islam is, and what the difference between Islam and Muslims is?* (M6)

*I see both positive and negative. I have seen the Reclaim Australia stuff, but I don’t actually go searching for it. I am weary of reading this stuff, especially as a woman as I don’t want to live in a world of paranoia.* (F3)

Four out of the twenty participants indicated they had not witnessed any information that either supported or attacked the Muslim identity on social media, whilst the remaining sixteen participants provided evidence that they have witnessed this information. As some participants articulated:

*My students told me recently that there was a post that said you would get a reward if you killed a Muslim or pulled the Hijab off a woman. They were scared. I said don’t worry about it, just be strong. Even If they pull off your Hijab, it is not your free will, it was forced so you will be OK.* (M7).

*I know that social media has been used to attack Muslims. In the UK there was post that went viral that was titled ‘Bash a Muslim Day’. Also, with the Martin Place siege,
social media almost went into a melt down with the number of derogatory and anti-Muslim comments. Even by so called moderate people. (F6).

The extensive research conducted for this inquiry supports the phenomenon of Muslims feeling that they are directly targeted within social media and highlights the use of social media, by some users, to spread anti-Muslim and Islamophobic propaganda across social platforms. It is argued that this is instigated or encouraged by some Westerners to cease or halt the immigration of Muslims into Western countries, or to whip up prejudice and hate against Muslims. This anti-Muslim discourse raging across the cyber world continues today and as indicated by researchers Ittefaq and Ahmad (2018, p. 39): “Islam continues to be the only religion in the world today that is still portrayed as negative on social media”.

Most participants (75%) stated that they had not witnessed any social media material directly linked to any Islamic terrorist organisations, or comments by friends or associates who supported these types of organisations. However, five participants (25%) had personal dealings with people or had witnessed other people within Australia who, through social media, supported these types of organisation or made some comments in support of them, which caused them concern. As some participants articulated:

As I stated earlier with my friend who moved to Sydney. I noticed that his attitude in social media was changing, becoming more extreme and anti-Australian as time went on. He was getting responses from people who felt the same as he did and I was concerned that so many Australian Muslims on social media were angry and were supporting terrorism talk. - My friend in Sydney tried to join ISIS and fight for them in Syria. I was worried that he had turned like that and there were others who supported him. His parents were horrified of what he had tried and as they were not on social media, they had no idea. (M5).

My friends in Sydney were reposting ISIS material. I de-friended them and told them they needed a better education. (M11).
Friends in university reposted some ISIS material but were defriended because of radical views. (F8).

Furthermore, some participants described having personal relationships with friends who they claim have succumbed to the rhetoric of violent extremism. Others described not having any personal connections, but knew of specific high-profile public figures, including self-proclaimed sheikh, Junaid Thorne, a Western Australian individual who has alleged links to Islamic terrorist organisations and who has allegedly gathered anti-western supporters from the Muslim communities within Australia and overseas (Trigger, R., 2014, June, 28 ‘Perth Man Junaid Thorne investigated over alleged support for terrorist organisation ISIS),


Many of the participants described the negative impact that these radicalised Muslim spokespersons within Australia can cause them, as a result of the inference made by the general Australian community, and the perception that it portrays, that all Muslims are like minded and support radicalised terrorists.

Several participants described their personal contact with friends from Sydney whom held radical views, which had intensified into action, and several others voiced their concern that there were Muslims out there promoting hate and encouraging violence in the name of Islam. In addition, several participants described knowing firsthand of associates who had been influenced by social media to take up violent action against the Australian government and/or the authorities, or who openly supported others who did.

This caused several participants fear and distress, not only for the concern of the persons who held these radical views, but also for the Australian Muslim community in general, who may be held accountable for the actions of these few.

Other participants relayed their concerns that even though they did not know of any associates who held these radicalised views, they were none the less worried that the actions of these
people, or their intent, will cause a detrimental impact on them, as it will cause many Westerners to perceive that all Muslims feel the same as these detractors and terrorists. The power of social media to influence and promote anti-Western sentiment, and to recruit violent jihadists, is well documented within the research literature, and this is supported by the small number of participants involved in this study who have experienced this phenomenon directly.

**Economic**

**Social Discourse in Employment and the Impact on the Economic Market**

Most of the participants stated that they felt comfortable being a Muslim within their workplace and felt safe and secure to be recognised as a Muslim within their employment. Most believed that they were readily accepted by their non-Muslim co-workers and colleagues and furthermore, most of the participants did not believe that they were treated any differently by their non-Muslim work colleagues due to being a Muslim. However, what was highlighted by many of the participants in this research, was the reluctance to fully integrate into the Western way of life, despite their proclaimed desire to actively connect with their non-Muslim colleagues. This was mostly due, they claimed, to the religious and cultural differences that can exist between them and their non-Muslim colleagues. As indicated in the Australian Muslim report of Hassan and Lester (2015), this difference of cultures can be a block for labour mobility, particularly in the executive fields, as these religious and cultural barriers can be hard to overcome in the economic market of competition. Hassan and Lester (2015) further propose that the amalgamation of these two cultures, Muslim, and non-Muslim, is greatly improved when a good understanding of each other’s cultures is achieved and respect for the same occurs. This will then allow, they claim, Muslims to become accepted as active participants in the economic labour markets of Australia.

Inglehart and Norris (2009) conducted research examining Muslim integration into Western cultures and concentrated on 22 OECD member states to gather their evidence and relevant data. Their findings demonstrated that:
“On average, the basic social values of Muslim migrants fall roughly mid-way between those prevailing in their country of origin and their country of destination. We conclude that Muslim migrants do not move to Western countries with rigidly fixed attitudes; instead, they gradually absorb much of the host culture, as assimilation theories suggest.” (Inglehart and Norris, 2009, p. 1).

This assimilation theory is based on the evidence that “migrant populations living in western societies are predominately in the process of adapting to western cultures, while at the same time continuing to reflect the values learnt through primary socialisation in their original countries of origin” (Inglehart & Norris, 2009, p. 6). Acceptance and tolerance by the host country, with the aim for inclusiveness and acceptance of diversity and differences, means that an authentic friendship and acceptance may occur.

The aim to integrate into the Australian work culture was clearly articulated by the participants in this research, and this was evident in most discussions relating to their workplaces. Many participants indicated that they are regularly approached by their non-Muslim colleagues to discuss their issues or concerns surrounding the Muslim religion or culture, or simply just to learn more about them or Islam, out of a general interest. The few participants who did discuss their culture or religious background with their work colleagues, specified that they did not mind discussing these issues, and several in fact believed it was their religious duty to properly inform others on Islam and the Muslim faith. However, the majority highlighted that they did not discuss their religion or culture with colleagues and that the main reason for this was because they were not inclined to discuss their private lives with outsiders, or they were concerned that what they may say could be taken out of context, which may in turn harm the reputation of Islam as a peaceful religion.

Despite the participants’ intent to assimilate into their workplaces, two of the participants described receiving detrimental treatment at work and believed that this was due solely to them being a Muslim. These participants also believe that there exists an anti-Muslim rhetoric
within their respective workplaces, which they propose reflects a similar sentiment of the Australian society in general. As articulated by one participant:

I was the only Muslim in the whole company and an Arab. Just one Indian guy and a Muslim, the rest were Australians. One Australian co-worker was racist to me as well. The others were good. (M6)

This negative interaction within the workforce is consistent with the findings of Hassen and Lester (2015) who, in their study of Australian Muslims, identified many of the issues faced by Muslims within Australian workplaces, and the barriers that can exist to building positive and productive employer and employee relationships, and associated co-worker relationships. Both of which can cause an economic disadvantage. The findings of this research included Muslims being by-passed for development and promotion possibilities, based on their cultural and religious differences to the prominent non-Muslim culture, which in many instances disadvantaged them in the workforce and within the economic market.

One participant articulated that he had received preferential treatment due to his Muslim status, with the acknowledgment that this was to the detriment of non-Muslims who had applied for the same employment position and who possessed the same skill set. Even though this did not occur in Australia, it still indicates that discrimination of any person (Muslim or non-Muslim) can cause an economic detriment, by impacting on the individual’s input within the labour market. The remaining participants did not describe receiving detrimental or even favourable treatment at their employment and believed that they were treated similarly to any other employee within their workplace and were shown similar respect and consideration as their non-Muslim work colleagues.

Dunn et.al. (2015), in their study commissioned by ‘The Challenging Racism Project’, surveyed 585 participants to investigate the experiences and perceptions of Muslims living in
Sydney and to determine whether the perceptions of incompatibility and disaffection of Muslims was true, and whether this affected their participation into mainstream Australian society. This research “tested for the incompatibility and disaffection among Muslims in Australia as well as testing for the opposite - for settledness and belonging”. (Dunn et al., 2015, p. 9). This research resulted in similar findings to other studies on the assimilation of Muslims into Western societies, such as the UK and the USA. The research findings from these countries engendered a picture which highlights that most current studies on Muslim integration are now moving beyond those Muslims who feel marginalised or who are vulnerable to violent extremism and hate, and towards a normal, integrated ordinariness. This view is consistent with the findings from this research, which support the ideology of integrated ordinariness. Most participants stated that they feel free and comfortable to live their lives and to practice their religion and culture as everyday Australians, without detriment or disadvantage.

This normalised integration in turn creates the potential for greater economic growth for Australia, as Muslims who become more active participants within the labour market and who aim for higher levels of employment, social upper mobility and equal opportunities, can create greater opportunities within industries and organisations. This, in turn, expands employment opportunities which will improve both the individual’s and the nation’s financial prospects for greater prosperity. However, what became evident in this research was the reluctance by some participants to actively engage with non-Muslims in the many social aspects of employment and community life, which can create barriers or restrict the opportunities for upper mobility within the workforce.

Most participants articulated their desire to become contributing and active members of Australian society; however, only a few of the participants, predominantly only those participants who had converted to Muslim, could cite any true social relationships or connections that they have or had made, with non-Muslim Australians. Others did have professional relationships with non-Muslim Australians, usually as part of their expected work
engagements, but only a few could relate experiences of engaging socially with non-Muslim Australian co-workers, and very few participants in this research could identify any non-Muslims as a close or valued friend. Perhaps if these relationships are being avoided by choice, then this may arguably contribute to the mistrust that can exist between Muslim and non-Muslim Australians.

Noor (2007) proposes that Muslim identity and the concerns surrounding Islam are increasingly being defined in terms of oppositional dialectic that pits Muslims against the rest of the world. Islamophobia, he claims, is perpetrated by the Western media, and creates a situation whereby Muslims and non-Muslims are increasingly at odds with each other, which restricts meaningful relationships. Noor proposes that the solution to the current predicament can be resolved when Muslims and non-Muslims understand the concept of ‘tawhid’ which reminds Muslims that all human beings are equal and are thus entitled to their own share of respect and dignity. He further proposes that “When Muslims’ concerns for justice, equity, rights and freedoms are articulated in the context of a borderless world, where the audience is not only Muslims, but the world as a whole, that will be the time when the image of Islam and Muslims will stand above the crude and poisonous images we see today” (Noor, 2007, p. 276).

According to the Deloitte Economics Benefit Report (2019): “Improving social inclusion – defined here as ‘affording all people the best opportunities to enjoy life and prosper in society’ – is a source of economic strength and higher living standards. Having an inclusive society avoids the costs incurred when people are excluded – from jobs, from businesses and from accessing social services. Social inclusion harnesses our diversity as a fuel for small business formation, creativity, and innovation. Around one-third of small businesses in Australia, representing 1.41 million employees, are run by migrants to Australia, 83% of whom did not own a business before coming to Australia” (2019, p. 6.)

It is therefore imperative for the economic benefits of our nation that WA Muslims and WA non-Muslims work in collaboration with each other and strive for integration to improve
social inclusion and professional relationships so that true pecuniary and societal benefits can be realised.

Political

Political influence that creates Division

When describing their political spectrum and/or affiliation, the majority of the participants did not hold a preference for any specific political party in Australia, or WA, and most stated that they based their votes on the policies of the day, and not on which political party led these policies. A small proportion of the participants detailed their affiliation towards the Labor political party, who they believed catered for a more inclusive multicultural Australia when compared to the other Australian political parties. One participant expressed their support for the Greens, whilst another cited a preference for the Australian Liberal party. Most participants stated that they did not hold a preference for any specific political party; however, with a sense of unified resentment, they did name Pauline Hanson and her political party, ‘One Nation’ as the person and party who they believed held the most incorrect and divisive views on Muslims and Islam within Australia. Most participants ridiculed the public comments made by Pauline Hanson and the racist views of her ‘One Nation’ party. As articulated by some participants:

Pauline Hanson does not really seem to know or understand Muslims, yet she talks a lot about our religion like she knows it. I don’t like that. (F5)

Pauline Hanson, she doesn’t like Muslims, she makes comment on about Muslims, and it doesn’t sound like she actually has a very positive view on Muslims. That’s one that stands out. But she has very odd views on many things, you know different cultures and different religions you know, not just Muslims. (F2)

As identified in the Islamophobia in Australia Report (2014-16), prepared by the Board for the Islamophobia Register of Australia, Pauline Hanson and her political party, ‘One Nation’, are the only political party in Australia to release a specific Islam Policy (released 26
April 2016), which commences with the claim that ‘Australia is built on a culture of Christian values’. This claim does not “recognise the contributions of Muslims and other multicultural groups who have been in Australia since colonisation” (Briskman & Latham, 2016. p. 14).

Many Muslims, including the participants from this study, view Pauline Hanson and her political party as an extremely divisive party, who has the aim of slowing or stopping the immigration of Muslims into Australia and also to restrict the religious and cultural practices of Muslims already residing in Australia.

This anti-Muslim migration and anti-assimilation sentiment, which is championed by several of Australia’s right-wing political party leaders, has a detrimental impact on many Muslims, who as a result believe they are not welcomed into Australia by supporters of these political parties, which arguably consists of a large percentage of Australian citizens. In the 2019 Australian Federal election, 438,587 voters, or 3.1% of the total Australian population voted for the Australian One Nation Party. This is an increase swing of +1.8% compared to the previous Federal election.


This rise in votes indicates an increase in support for a party that espouses extreme right-wing ideologies, which includes restricting Muslim migration into Australia and the banning of specific Muslim dress and religious preparation of food (Halal), as part of their party’s political agenda. (Muller, D., 2020, June 29, ‘The 2019 Federal Election’).

Many of the participants in this study believe that these right-wing political leaders promote hate speech as part of their normal political discourse, and that they remain protected under the guise of ‘freedom of speech’, when they should be stopped by existing legislation which was designed to restrict this hate speech. Because they are not stopped, and because they can continue in this manner, it appears to the novice political observer that they are gaining more supporters with each Federal election. This, in turn, creates a belief by many
Muslims that a large percentage of Australians agree with these racist views, and that the general community within Australia do not want Muslims living here.

Most participants agree with the general principles of Australia’s liberal democracy and with most of the current policies and practices of the main Australian political parties. Mention was made of the Westminster system of government that exists within Australia and many of the participants approved of the separation of powers that exists between the three arms of government and the fairness of the democratic political system overall. However, the subject of Shari’ah law was raised by several participants as being desirable, despite their acknowledgement that this law is viewed negatively by the Australian public. As one participant indicated:

*When most people hear Shari’ah law it comes with a lot of negativity. They always think of the worse and I don’t understand why. But then I do understand because very many Muslim countries around the world misinterpret it. All of the execution things, it’s horrible. No wonder it gets misinterpreted negatively.* (F3)

This negative view is well articulated in the researched literature concerning Muslims and Islam and the controversial subject of ‘Shari’ah law’ and the introduction of this doctrine, or rules of Muslim law, into mainstream Australian society.

The main aim of supporters of Shari’ah law is to reduce a legal system that is based on a secular nation, where freedom of religion and worship is protected, and to move towards a more pluralistic model, where religion of main cultures are actively intertwined into the Australian legal system. As described by Dabner (2016):

“Shari’ah is the set of principles that regulate the relationship between Muslims and God, and between themselves. It derives from the principles laid down 1,400 years ago in the Qur’an, believed to contain the word of God transmitted to the Prophet Mohammed, and the Sunnah, rules derived from Hadith, a document capturing the
actions and life of Mohammed. Together, these rules are the subject of interpretation and extension by Islamic (legal) scholars, creating a body of Islamic jurisprudence or fiqh. As with Indigenous customary law, there is considerable variation in the interpretation and application of Shari’ah in the Muslim world. This is particularly relevant to Australia, whose Muslims come from eighty different nations, with fifty different ethnicities and cultures” (Dabner, 2016, p. 8).

Wide ranging debate has occurred between multiple scholars, including Dabner (2016), Black (2015), and Lindsey (2016) who argue that, whilst Australia holds onto one law, and one that is inscribed within the Common Laws of Britain, there is a growing requirement for our legal system to accommodate all people in Australia, and to cater for the cultural differences that have existed since colonisation, where the basis of these laws was first established.

There is great conjecture between scholars in relation to the introduction of Shari’ah law and this is not surprising when one considers the differing aspects of Shari’ah law and the confusing landscape for Westerners to navigate. The socio-political aspects of Shari’ah law have differing perspectives for many Muslims, based on their own cultural and religious upbringings and belief systems. Australian researcher, Mehmet Ozalp (2012), conducted an extensive study of Shari’ah law in Australia, and provided an understanding of Shari’ah law, in its true sense, and articulated in his study the main key components of Shari’ah law that politicians and laypersons need to learn and comprehend. According to Ozalp, Shari’ah literally means ‘a way to a watering hole’. In the Islamic lexicon, Shari’ah is the divine path and guidance for humanity on earth. In this sense, it is always fair, just, and equitable. Ozalp describes the key components of Shari’ah law as follows:

“The collective effort of Muslims to understand Shari’ah is called fiqh which is only an attempt to reach the ideals. The purpose of Shari’ah is the welfare of people and the purpose of fiqh is to implement Shari’ah. When Muslim scholars talk about Islamic
law, they refer to fiqh as the reflection of Shari’ah in human understanding. Islamic law (fiqh) was traditionally categorised into three broad fields – religious worship and rituals (ibadat), human relations in civil transactions (muamalat) and a penal code (uqubat). To this general categorisation could be added legal literature dealing with objectives and principles of law (maqasid), state and government (ahkam alsultaniyyah), and international law, war, and peace (‘ilm as-siyar)” (Ozalp, 2012, p. 67).

The above definition and description highlight the complicating fundamental principles of Shari’ah law, which are required to be fully understood before they can be implemented into Australian law. These principles can be interpreted differently as they are based on individual and collective (State Actors) perspectives, of what is determined good or evil, and which can differ even amongst Muslims, based on non-homogenous cultural and religious understandings. Most Western politicians and individuals who oppose Shari’ah law do so primarily based only on their misinterpretation of the uqubat (Penal Code), which is portrayed in many instances by Western media as completely barbaric and cruel.

There remains a growing community request for the Australian legal system to accommodate strong cultural laws and guidelines, which includes customary laws from the First Nations people (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples) as well as aspects of Islamic Shari’ah law, specifically into matters concerning family and domestic laws, where they mostly operate (Rane and Abdalla, 2008). Support for reform in this area is growing stronger every year in Australia by vested and politically influential Islamic and human-rights interest groups.

This aim for the establishment of Islamic law within Australia has fuelled a Nationalist opposition rhetoric, espoused by some political groups such as One Nation and The Rise Up Australian Party, who oppose the introduction of this Islamic law or any other cultural law into Australia. These parties argue that proposed changes to our secular national laws will create a situation where different laws for different cultural groups will develop a major
division within Australia. They also claim that there may exist a defined prejudice or bias in some legal matters that will create separate laws for family and domestic legal matters, to the detriment of the host nation (Esmaeili, 2015).

Research undertaken by Dunn et al., (2015) into the introduction of Shari’ah law into Australia highlighted that there was a high percentage of apprehension by many Australian citizens who believed this push for the introduction of Shari’ah law will change the Australian legal landscape and their current way of life, as such, they wish to maintain a secular ‘one law for all’ approach.

Yilmaz (2005) has identified that with a very large proportion of the Muslim communities within Australia, Shari’ah law is already regulated into their everyday lives, through cultural regulations that direct the legal relationships that many Australian Muslims enter into and out of, including marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance, as well as contractual and commercial dealings. The need to have legal questions answered and disputes settled by persons with Islamic credentials has been identified as being very important to Muslims, and whilst there is no rejection of Australian law, according to Yilmaz (2005), there is a desire to conform with Shari’ah law when it is possible to do so, and in instances such as marriage both systems of law can co-exist.

Perceptions of Counter Terrorism Laws

Participants described their perceptions of anti-terrorism measures introduced by the Australian government. Several participants considered the anti-terrorism measures to be warranted. As some participants articulated:

*Under the circumstances they are needed, but it is the application of these laws that are problematic. (F8)*

*Needed to keep us safe. I don’t want bombs or suicide jihadists going off here. (M9)*
However, many of the participants also described the anti-terrorism measures as being excessive. For example, some participants articulated:

*Excessive and scary – young people can be locked away from their parents for a long time* (F7)

*Excessive by a long shot. You can hold people without charge for 14 days and without warrant search any place or thing you like. This is based on Intel or information they get and that can be very dubious at best.* (F9).

Participant narratives surrounding anti-terrorism legislation and the requirement of pre-existing detention and control orders, identified that there is a held fear by several of the participants over the application of these orders towards Australian Muslims. This fear, which was predominately held by the Muslim women, centred on the proposition that their children or family members could innocently be caught up in these detention laws and taken from them for periods of up to 14 days, or more, and without their knowledge of the reasons for this detention. The main concern of detention of young Muslim people, was based on media reports and the personal anecdotes that these participants had heard from fellow Muslims, residing in the eastern states of Australia, where there are much higher rates of apprehension under this counter terrorism legislation, compared to WA.

This fear is supported by the New South Wales Council for Civil Liberty (NSWCCL) who in their assessment of the current Australian anti-terrorism legislation claim:

‘The October COAG meeting (2017) will endorse a nationally consistent C-T framework. It will include controversial new offences and powers – largely modelled on either the Commonwealth or the NSW high risk terrorist laws passed in 2016. NSWCCL strongly opposed these laws at the time – particularly the extension of preventative detention orders to cover persons as young as 14 and extending the period of this detention to 14 days in the NSW Act; and the introduction of post- sentence, continuing detention of up to 5 years for
prisoners convicted of a serious terrorist offence and judged to be at risk of reoffending if released, in the Commonwealth Act.’ (Lynch, L., 2018, March 23, ‘Legislative assault on civil society and public political discourse’)


This information provided by the NSW Civil Liberty Council, which is supported by other Civil Liberty Councils of Australia, identifies the basis for this concern and highlights the fear felt by many Muslims within Australia. This is a fear that, without warrant and without justification, their children and family members may be removed from their homes or streets without warning and detained by the government for long periods of time for questioning.

Participants indicated that the best way to combat this fear is to ensure greater Muslim participation into the design and creation of any new anti-terrorism legislation. This view is consistent with the findings of Hassan and Martin (2015) who identified that Muslims need to become more involved in all tiers of the Australian government. Therefore, they need to become active participants in the machinations of government, and in particular to become involved in the change process required to draft national security legislation, which will recognise the impacts that the application of these laws may have, if applied discriminately.

The participants in this research held strong views about how the Australian government at all tiers could work more proactively with the Muslims of Australia. The following comments describe some of the participants’ ideas on how the Australian government could work more proactively with Muslims:

I think more engagement will lead to a better understanding. Provide different views, and I think that works both ways. So, when a community feels isolated or left out it is easy to get misconceptions about certain things. So, more engagement I think will make people more, feel more part of the community as well. I think that is important to do more in the collaboration and engagement part. And I think that
we in the Islamic community should be doing more in terms of leadership and engagement with the rest of the community. And the political leaders. (M1)

I think the government needs to understand the differences between internal and external politics impacting on Muslims. For example, to cater for me you need to treat Muslims all over the world well. If you interfere in other Muslim’s business in world events, then that will influence and impact on me. They need to revise the external relations they get involved in. Why are they sending troops into areas that have nothing to do with them? That could have an impact on us here, so they are not servicing us by doing this. (M7)

Stop labelling, just treat them as normal citizens. Acknowledge that we are an Individual people, even though we follow Islam we are the same as everyone else in the world. We work, we volunteer, we celebrate Australia Day. Be more inclusive. (F4)

Participants’ views about how well state and local governments worked with the Muslim community were also mixed. Some participants indicated:

I do not think state government is much different from Federal government, but local government seem to be better at the grassroots and are usually more inclusive of the communities. (F6).

I think local government work very well with people on the streets. At the local community level. They are part of the same community so are interested in what is really happening and want to help. (F5).

Depends. The local government I work for treat Muslims as the same as everyone else. No separate policies. I remember talking to a local
council in Perth and they said they were changing the name of the end of the year Christmas holidays, to accommodate Muslims, I said did you know by doing that you are creating more conflict. We don’t care.

Most Muslims celebrate the birth of Jesus as he is one of our prophets.

(F4)

Research conducted by Al-Momani et.al. (2010), which involved extensive interviews of Muslims within Australia, identified that the increased political participation of Muslims was beneficial in promoting inclusion of all views in the political spectrum and supports the diversity of views and ideas needed in a healthy liberal society. These researchers also highlighted that there now existed several Australian and overseas initiatives that assisted to facilitate this political participation, and they propose that local government is the preferred tier of government for most Muslims within Australia. Their research identified that the majority of Muslims within Australia reside within NSW and Victoria (at the time of this research) and that most Muslims involved in Australian politics were predominately positioned in local government areas, where there was a high representation of Muslims. Only a small representation of Muslims was represented in state governments across Australia and only one Muslim was identified in Federal politics at the time of this study. Findings of Al-Momani et al also identified that:

“None of our interviewees reported having experienced religious discrimination hindering their efforts to become politically active, although some found the machinations of party politics incompatible with their faith” (Al-Momani et al., 2010, p. 4).

Participants in this research also expressed a favouritism towards local government and the grass-root levels of service provision that they received from local government. Collectively, the finding of this research, and the body of research examined, indicates that not many Muslims appear to be involved in any of the tiers of government within Australia politics. This
could be a consequence of the reluctance of some Muslims to participate, due to a sense of not belonging (amongst other things), or the perception that they would not be welcomed by non-Muslims if they did attempt to join.

However, the impact of not participating creates a situation whereby the desired changes or amendments to current or proposed anti-terrorism legislation may not occur, as the active voice for Muslims is not heard or visible.

**What/Who Constitutes a Good Muslim?**

Participants were asked to describe individuals within their community who they believed reflected the most ‘accurate’ description of what being a good Muslim is, and what a Muslim may want whilst living in Australia. This was a deliberately subjective line of questioning, and the question was asked to determine if the participants would stereotype a single category of Muslim, as many non-Muslim Australians are inclined to do. This question was not designed to obtain that stereotype, but to determine any commonalities amongst the participants’ descriptions to determine a standard they attempt to achieve.

The various cultural differences between Muslim groups made this question almost impossible to answer. As Muslims are not a homogenous group, they cannot and should not ever be classified as all the same or classified unilaterally as different to other Australians. Participants held diverse views of what constituted a ‘good Muslim’; however, their description did not appear to be any different than what many people perceive to be a ‘good Australian’ or a ‘good citizen’. This was characterised as being an honest, hard-working, and law-abiding citizen, who wants to get along with their fellow citizens and to be free to practice their religion and culture in harmony with other Australians. Moreover, findings from this research indicated that many Muslims feel they are not able to demonstrate their intent to be a good Australian citizen, or that their attempts will be resisted, which has caused many to not even try to integrate more. This can promote feelings of disengagement from mainstream Australians and cause some Australian to continue considering Muslims as the ‘others’ in our society, because of the perception that they are not trying to assimilate or integrate.
CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview

The aim of this research was to examine the lived experiences of Western Australian (WA) Muslims in the current political and social climate, and within the context of national security and anti-terrorism. This political climate was identified as being the current situation in Australia where broad-reaching anti-terrorism laws have been introduced, and where this legislation, with the accompanying control orders and other national security measures, have been enacted and enforced.

A generic qualitative methodology approach was utilised for this research, which was underpinned by the interpretive paradigm, so as to explore the phenomena under inquiry, by capturing the lived experiences of the participants, in as naturalistic setting as possible. This method also allowed the researcher to maintain an objective position, to better understand the phenomena under inquiry by exploring the multiple levels of known and unknown knowledge in the continuum of knowing. Interview questions asked of the participants were aligned with an environmental scanning framework, allowing the consideration of Socio-Cultural, Technological, Economic and Political (STEP) aspects of the participants’ described meanings.

The participants interviewed in this study were well informed and articulate individuals who, through their normal day to day social interactions and through their professions and employment or educational position (i.e., student or teacher), regularly engage with non-Muslims within Western Australia. This familiarity provided them with a rich and abundant collection of experiences and knowledge to draw upon and offer, which provided valuable insights and essential data for this research.

The honesty, candour and validity in which the participants answered the questions asked by the researcher, allowed for an in-depth exploration of the participants’ own experiences, and provided an unexpected plethora of data, as well as affording an opportunity to gain a detailed understanding of how their experiences and meaning were structured and
formed. This allowed the researcher an opportunity to not only understand what was being said to him, but also allowed for a comprehension as to how these opinions were formed and validated by the participant.

Collectively, findings from this research showed that many of the participants have experienced biased, prejudiced, and discriminatory treatment by fellow Western Australians. When describing normal interactions with non-Muslims, particularly at work, and in public spaces such as shopping centres, theatres, university or school and especially when using public transport, participants described how they had been targeted for abuse and scorn due to the wearing of their cultural clothing (predominately the women) or for their ethnic appearances and obvious differences to most caucasian Australians. These reactions have caused many of the participants to become cautious of non-Muslims in WA and this has resulted in many avoiding these situations by remaining close to their own cultural or religious group and even to cease using public transport.

The provision and delivery of law enforcement and other similar services by national and state government agencies was a key factor in the findings of this research. This was particularly evident in relation to security and policing practices, which many of the participants felt were directed unfavourably at Muslims. Moreover, even though these laws were enacted to apply to all Australian residents and groups, participants believed that the main emphasis of the legislation was to target Muslims. It is easy to comprehend why most respondents believed this as they offered as an example of how, to date, the only people and groups subjected to this specific legislation have all been from a Muslim background. This is despite the increase of radical right-wing ideology within Australia, where a propensity for violence against Muslims and other minority groups has risen sharply in recent years (Atie, Dunn., and Ozalp, 2017). The recent terrorist attack in New Zealand (March, 2019) where 50 Muslims were killed by a caucasian Australian male, with right-wing tendencies, is evidence to this growing threat.
Several of the participants (predominately the women interviewed) spoke of the fear they held, for their children and family, who may be innocently apprehended in these anti-terrorism laws and strategies. A key finding of this research was that many of these participants were worried that their children would be taken from them and held in detention centres for long periods of time, without their knowledge of the specific allegations made against them. This described sense of fear was determined to be comparable to the level of conjoined (Hassan & Martin, 2015). These fears have intensified in more recent years, due to the vast introduction of Australian anti-terrorism legislation, a rapid increase which has caused several state and national Islamic corporations and organisations to raise their objections to this legislation with the Federal government. As a means to highlight their apprehensions over what they consider the blatant targeting of Australian Muslims, by Australian security agencies and police, whose actions can be describe as both discriminatory and unlawful (Kfir, 2019).

In response to these raised concerns, the Government has responded with a submission to parliament to introduce the *Counter Terrorism Legislation Amendment Bill 2019* (Cth). This Bill proposes that in relation to the Control Orders and detentions of persons under 18 years of age, there will have to be exceptional evidence to justify this detention. This new submission states:

“The Bill would amend the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth) (Crimes Act) to introduce an exceptional circumstances test for persons charged with or convicted of a terrorism offence (or previously charged with or convicted of certain offences), persons subject to a control order and persons who have made statements or carried out activities supporting, or advocating support for, terrorist acts.

That is, there is not only a presumption against bail and parole but a further stringent test to be satisfied. It also provides that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration, with the protection of the community the paramount consideration, when determining whether exceptional circumstances exist where the person is under
the age of 18 years” (Law Council of Australia, 2019, August 27, ‘Supplementary Submission: Review of the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (2019 Measures No 1) Bill 2019.

This proposed amendment to the current counter terrorism legislation was introduced in response to the fear that was held by many Muslims concerning the possibility that young Muslims maybe detained for long periods of time without the support or even the knowledge of their family. This modification was agreed to as a direct result of the lobbying by key Muslim groups, the Australian legal fraternity and Australian and international human rights organisations who sought government changes to this legislation to protect the rights of all young people within Australia.

Despite many of the concerns raised by participants, the requirement for anti-terrorism legislation within Australia is unfortunately a necessity, and this is evidenced in the findings from the Counter Terrorism Policy Centre of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, who report that:

“Australia has experienced numerous terror plots—between 2013 and 2019, for example, public reporting shows that at least 15 plots have been thwarted in Australia. They have included an attempt at random beheadings, vehicle-based attacks, and an attack on crowds at an Anzac Day parade and the application of these laws have led to more than 55 convictions for terrorism-related offences”. (Kfir, 2019, p.5).

There have been efforts by policymakers to emphasise that it is not Islam, Muslims, or both that are the cause of terrorism, but individuals who have embraced the al-Qaeda ideology of violent extremism.

This report further identified that “sensationalist media coverage, coupled with populist rhetoric about the danger posed by the ‘other’ (Muslims), helps to explain why the
2018 Lowy Institute Poll found that two-thirds of Australians are anxious that “terrorists could kill innocent Australian citizens in our cities”. (Kfir, 2019, p. 4).

A level of expectation to be treated with suspicion and weariness by mainstream Western Australians perpetuated the overall narratives of the participants interviewed in this research. However, these participants did not apportion blame or fault to any other Western Australian, or even to the individual transgressors who levelled abuse or ridicule at them, or who threatened them with violence. Rather, these participants offered a level of understanding and acceptance that they were not recognised on face value as fellow Australian citizens, and that they had more work to do themselves to achieve this outcome and to prove they did not intend harm to any non-Muslim Australian.

Greater support for Muslims by non-Muslims in WA was also evident in these findings, and it became apparent that the participants themselves believed that only a small minority of Western Australians held or conveyed racist or discriminatory feelings towards them. The vast majority of Western Australians, they claimed through their responses, proved that they were tolerable and welcoming and that they wished to learn more about the Muslim faith and culture out of general interest and to form stronger bonds.

The interviews conducted in this research revolved around the life stories of the participants and their views on the importance of integrating into the WA way of life and their perceptions of what it means to be Australian and un-Australian, which afforded me an opportunity to examine their citizenship. As a result, the findings from this research identified that the strongest aspiration of most of these participants, was to achieve and feel an overall sense of belonging and settledness within WA.

It also became evident to the researcher that these participants, who could be considered mostly hard-working, productive and engaging individuals, sought what many other Muslims in Australia want, and that is to “move beyond feeling marginalised and vulnerable towards
violent extremism and hate, and towards a normal, integrated ordinariness” (Dunn et al., 2015, p. 9). To be considered average Australian citizens, who are productive, engaging, and generous, appeared to be the main aspiration for many of these participants. Not to be treated any differently, merely because they also happen to be Muslim, or to be offered any special consideration because of their faith or culture. Just to be ordinary Australians and provided the same legal and human rights and opportunities as every other Australian.

**Implications for Government**

The findings of this research suggest that Australian authorities, within all levels of the Australian government (national and state), could be far more inclusive of the WA Muslim community when they engineer laws and policies which are directed at reducing extreme radicalisation and violence within the Australian community. Improved laws, which are inclusive of all Australian citizens could be drafted if Muslims are included in the design stage of any new legislation, or with the government driven strategies or policies aimed at preventing terrorism in Australia.

As part of a consultancy process to determine what negative impacts these laws could have on specific sections of the community, greater WA Muslim representation could reduce this negative impact and create a conjoined response to deal with terrorism in this country. The participants in this research felt that further integration into local and state government, the media, and the wider public sector, would assist to break down cultural barriers and improve social cohesion. This argument is supported in the findings of the extensive research literature conducted for this inquiry.

Integration of WA Muslims with the general Australian population appeared to be a high expectation of the participants interviewed in this study, and they highlighted the many occasions where they faced challenges in this attempt to form meaningful relationships.

Whilst promising signs were described by the participants, in their efforts to engage with the general WA Community, there was also an indication that these participants predominately remained within their individual Muslim communities and did not actively seek to engage
with non-Muslims, particularly within the social aspects of their lives. For greater representation in the political and social spheres of communal life in WA, it is important that Muslims make every effort to socialise and interact with non-Muslims, to break down further barriers and to integrate into the western culture, whilst promoting and educating non-Muslims on the value and benefits of their religion and culture.

**Implications for Future Research**

This research highlighted the negative impact that current Australian government policies and practices, which concentrate on reducing the opportunities for extreme radicalisation and terrorism, can have on Muslims within WA. The literature examined for this research also indicates that these negative impacts are also experienced by Muslims residing in other Australian states and territories. Despite a more inclusive approach now occurring within the political sphere, there remains an essential need to involve the Muslim community more in the design and implementation of strategies that will directly or indirectly impact on Muslims in Australia. Particularly in the field of national security and law and order. Further research will be required to determine if this consultative approach has occurred, and if the effect of these Australian laws, polices and strategies has decreased the negative impacts for Muslim communities, by virtue of their active involvement in the design, introduction and implementation of future collaborative processes. It is acknowledged that this collaboration will at times be challenging and difficult, but it is essential that every effort is made by government, to strive for this co-design and collaborative approach towards any new anti-terrorism legislation.

This research further identified the growth of right-wing ideology and the increasing influence of far-right politics within Australia in recent years. This phenomenon needs further examination to determine if this growing political sentiment and dogma will create a more divisive and negative impact on Australian Muslims in the immediate future. This growth of extreme far-right politics within Australia and the increase in white supremacist attitudes, where sections of the white population believe there is no place for ethnic or minority groups
in Australia, is causing further problems for Muslims and more particularly, for the police and security agencies who are required to protect all Australian citizens (Maher, 2015).

The growth of extreme far-right politics has witnessed a regrettable leaning towards violence and carnage, to have their political intent known, which is the very definition of terrorism and violent extremism. As previously discussed, the recent terrorist attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand (March 2019) is evidence of the violent reaction by some extremist right-wing supporters. Actuated by a single white supremacist Australian citizen, this attack provides evidence of the influence that the mass media and negative socialisation can have on violent individuals, and why messages of how the Australian Muslim’s intent to integrate peacefully into the Australian way of life, and to bring with them their positive contributions to our society, is so important.

To reduce the possibility and likelihood of further terrorist attacks, due to extremist Islamic-inspired ideologies, or radical right-wing dogma, Australian societies need to understand the importance of the integration of cultures and to strive for peace and harmony with all Australians, regardless of race, religion or culture, or whether they were born here or overseas. This philosophy of integration into mainstream Australia is another area for further research, as evidence from this research indicates that many Muslim communities remain insular and segregated. This is normally due to religious and cultural reasons that they predominately engage with fellow Muslims, rather than non-Muslims. Whilst this is also common to many other ethnic groups residing within Western countries, it is imperative for Muslims to actively demonstrate that they are not a threat to Australians and that their religion and culture is compatible to the Australian way of life and fits in with the Australian ideology of multiculturalism.

Limitations

This study attracted twenty Muslim participants from WA, which provided an adequate sample size to determine the impacts that the introduced counter terrorism legislation and the application of the same, could have on the general population of Muslims within WA.
It was also an adequate sample size group to provide some evidence to determine if Muslims in Western Australia, like their Eastern State counterparts feel a general hostility towards them by mainstream Australians, due to the fear that they are terrorists and are not to be trusted! However, this is only one study, limited to a WA sample, and findings are therefore not generalisable to the national experience.

An additional issue to consider was the use of a structured rather than a semi-structured interview process. As this research was exploratory and rich descriptions of experiences were being sought, a structured method was still deemed as appropriate to ensure the phenomenon under inquiry contained consistent questions to explore the same phenomena and in the same fashion. In this research the participants were asked the exact same questions (structured interview), however the subjective answers provided by some participants was adopted by the researcher, which allowed the answers to the questions to flow in various directions, providing further evidence to the researcher on how the meanings became constructed. This mixed method of using a structured interview questionnaire but allowing for a semi-structured analysis of the answers to those questions fitted the benefits of a generic qualitative approach to obtain a greater understanding of the phenomenon under inquiry. Overall, this method ensured rigor and validity for these findings.

Another limitation was the snowballing technique used to recruit participants for this study, which concentrated on the referrals by a professional colleague within the WA Police Force, who invited other Muslims within his professional and social spheres of influence. This initially resulted in many of the initial participants involved in this research also being professional individuals from the same culture and demographics. It was not until these initial contacts invited others that these demographics changed and participants unknown to the referee were recruited, which provided variety in perspective outlooks.

It was decided at the onset of this research to only interview ‘adult’ Muslims (persons over 18 years of age) and this was based on the convenience of obtaining consent from a single source (the adult) and not requiring parent permission and their attendance at interviews (to
accompany the child). Another reluctance by the researcher to involve children was the personal experience that in the presence of an adult, children may be reluctant to disclose pertinent information or alternatively, due to their tender ages, they would not have the lived experiences that were required to examine the phenomenon under investigation. The limitation to this of course is that the voice of younger people was not present in this research, even though some of the participants were very young adults. A different demographic group of Muslims could possibly have produced a different outcome of findings, however the findings from this research is consistent with the findings of similar research conducted with Muslims in other parts of Australia and overseas.

CONCLUSION

This research adds to the limited knowledge available regarding the impact of current Australian anti-terrorism laws and policies, the concerning application of these laws and the media’s response to the same, on WA Muslims. In summary, there is a perception among WA Muslim communities that Australian police and security jurisdictions continue to work external to the communities they serve.

Until it is accepted that the communities most affected by radicalised individuals must also be part of this framework and solution, it is likely anti-terrorism strategies will fail. How these laws and policies are impacting on WA Muslims, and if they are in fact causing further divisions between WA Muslims and non-Muslims was explored in this research, and even though this research only involved a small group of participants (20), it is indicative that there remains a political and social divide between Muslims and non-Muslims in WA.

This study also afforded the opportunity to fill a significant gap in current literature concerning the described experiences of WA Muslims; particularly in an environment where national security and its accompanying legislation to combat terrorism has been escalated. A better and more informed understanding of the experiences of WA Muslims within this current political climate will be of great benefit to policy makers who wish to create true social
cohesion and harmony and who intend to involve all sectors of the community in the development of future legislation.

The WA Muslims involved in this study highlighted that they held a desire to be lawful, peaceful, respectful and productive members of society, and wished to be part of the solution to reduce the violence and bloodshed that is being orchestrated in the name of Islam. Participants in this study proposed that their religion can be more correctly portrayed through their good actions, words and deeds, as a true religion of peace and showcase that it is not a threat to Australia, as is often portrayed in the media. Many of the participants highlighted the urgency in policy makers within Australia understanding that Muslims are by the majority, law-abiding citizens who contribute greatly to the social, political, and economic fabric of Australian society. They do not deserve to be considered suspect in any criminal activity, over and above any other section of the community.

An unexpected consequence of conducting this study was the additional learnings gained by the researcher in relation to the overall intent of the participants to successfully integrate into the Australian way of life. The fact that 20 participants willingly came forward to offer their opinions and describe their lived experiences indicated their resolve to be part of the solution to the current discourse and to move forward with other Australians; to live in peace and harmony.

This research identified the main sentiment of these participants – for settledness and ordinariness within Western Australia – which disproves some of the sensationalist political and media claims that Muslims cannot and will not integrate into the normal Australian way of life. As these participants so clearly articulated through this research, this is their main wish!
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APPENDIX A – Information Letter

Dear Participants,

I am a current serving police officer with the Western Australian Police and am presently undertaking a Masters by Research in Criminal Justice scholarship with Edith Cowan University’s School of Arts and Humanities.

My research project is designed to interview the Muslim Community within Western Australia and to determine, in their experience, if the current political and social climate we currently live in has altered the way in which Muslims interact with police, the general public and each other.

I am particularly interested in hearing your stories concerning your lived experiences as a member of the Western Australian community.

I am seeking Muslim Adults (persons over 18 years old), both males and females for this study.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in an interview (face to face or by telephone), and at a location and time suitable to you. This interview will take approximately 1 hour. The location for any face to face interview will be at a venue within the Perth metropolitan area suitable to you. You will be asked some questions regarding how you feel as a community member of the general WA population as well as a member of the WA Muslim Community.

I will be personally involved in this interview process.

If you are willing to participate there is an attached consent form which you can fill out and scan and email direct to me. Potential Risks and Discomfort

There are no anticipated risks to your participation. When you feel some discomfort at responding to specific questions, please feel free to ask to skip these questions.

Potential benefits to Subjects and/or to Society

You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. The overall goal is to reveal the experiences of WA Muslims and to determine the impact that current counter-terrorism legislation and police and security practices are having on you and/or your community.
The findings may provide a better understanding of being a Muslim in WA, provide WA police and security agencies with a better understanding of the impacts of counter-terrorism policies and procedures, and give a greater insight into what involvement Muslims can have in future policy initiatives.

Payment/compensation for Participation
You will not receive any payment for your participation in this research study.

Potential Conflicts of Interest
The investigators of this research do not have any financial interest in the sponsor or in the product being studied.

Confidentiality
Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential, and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The information collected about you will be coded using a fake name (pseudonym) or initials and numbers, for example abc-123 etc. The information which has your identifiable details will be kept separate from the rest of your data.

The data will be stored in a secure location at the ECU campus and on a password protected computer.

The data will be stored for approximately 5 years after the study has been completed and then destroyed. Your consent will be asked for audio recording. You may decline to be taped.

The principal investigator will transcribe the tapes and may provide you with a copy of the transcripts upon request. You have the right to review and edit the tapes. Sentences that you ask investigators to leave out will not be used and they will be erased from all relevant documents.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

Participation and Withdrawal
You can choose whether to be a part of this study or not. If you volunteer to be a part of this study you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you are reluctant to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

Rights of Research Subjects
You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have any questions about your rights as a study subject or you would like to speak to someone independent of the research team to obtain answers to questions about the research, or in the event the research team cannot be reached, please contact the Edith Cowan University ‘Research Ethics Office’ on 6304 2170, or by email research.ethics@ecu.edu.au

Participation is completely voluntary and the identity of each participant will remain anonymous in the subsequent published thesis and publications submitted to academic journals. This research has the approval of the Edith Cowan University Ethics Committee.

If you would like to volunteer for this research project, please complete the attached informed consent form and return to me at your earliest opportunity. It is expected that the interviews will commence on May 23, 2017.
If you require any further details regarding this research, or to learn more of the intentions with the research, or for more information on myself, please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below. If you wish to speak to an independent person regarding the research process please contact the University Research Ethics Officer on (08) 6304 2170 or Email: research.ethics@ecu.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

Mr John Lehane

School of Arts and Humanities: Edith Cowan University Contact details:
Email: [REDACTED]
Telep [REDACTED]
Research: “The Experiences of West Australian (WA) Muslims within the Current Australian Political and Social Climate”.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research study conducted by a Masters candidate from the School of Arts and Humanities, Edith Cowan University (ECU).

To be included in this study you must be over 18 years of age and permanently reside in the State of Western Australia.

By signing this consent form you agree to the following conditions which forms part of this study.

• That a copy of the information letter explaining the full details of the study has been provided to you and the you fully understand the conditions mentioned within;

• That you have been given the opportunity to ask questions concerning the study and that these questions have been answered to your satisfaction;

• That you are aware that you can answer any further questions of the research team and that these questions will be answered to the best of their ability;

• That you understand that participation in this study involved;

• Being involved in a face to face or telephone interview of approximately 1-hour duration;

• That the face to face interview will be held at a business location within the metropolitan area;

• That this interview may be audio taped (permission sought) for the purpose of data collection, and

• That there is no financial benefit or reward of any kind to you for your involvement,

• Understand that the information provided will be kept confidential and that your identity will not be disclosed without your written permission;
Understand that the information provided will only be used for the purpose of this study and in line with ECU ethical guidelines;

Understand that ECU will hold this information securely within their institution for a period of 5 years and then it will be destroyed;

Understand that you are free to withdraw, without explanation or penalty at any time; and

That you freely agree to participate in this study.

Completion and return of the consent form and responses to the Interview questions will constitute consent to participate in this research project.

Your assistance in this project, if you do decide to continue, is appreciated.

Identification of Investigators

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the Master’s Candidate or the Faculty Advisor.

Master Candidate
John Lehane
Edith Cowan University
Business and Law
Tel.
Em

Faculty Advisor
Associate Professor
Pamela Henry
Edith Cowan University
Sellenger Centre for Research
Tel.
Em

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have decided to participate, having read the information provided above. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participant Signature_________________________ Date________________

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