

MUSLIMS IN INTERFAITH MARRIAGES IN THE WEST

**MUSLIMS IN INTERFAITH MARRIAGES IN THE WEST: GENDER,
GLOBALIZATION, AND PLURALISM**

By

NIDA ALI, B.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

© Copyright by Nida Ali, July 2017

MASTER OF ARTS (2017)

McMaster University

(Religious Studies)

Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Muslims in Interfaith Marriages in the West: Gender, Globalization, and
Pluralism

AUTHOR: Nida Ali, B.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor Celia Rothenberg

NUMBER OF PAGES: iv, 143

Abstract

As Muslims increasingly cross ethnic, religious, and social barriers within Western societies, the rate of interfaith marriages continues to rise. As a result, several issues are generated within the Muslim community globally. One of these issues focuses on the subjectivity of Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men since Islamic religious texts may be unclear and indirect regarding the issue. Additionally, Muslims in the West are increasingly exposed to individuals from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, which raises the probability of exogamy.

Many Muslims residing in the West do not have issues with exogamy; it is mostly familial and societal expectations that exude stress when individuals intermarry within the Muslim community. Openness to intermarriage among Muslims in the West can be attributable to differences in faith and identity development of second-generation Muslims growing up in Western countries, which can lead to a differentiation of Muslim identity in comparison to their parents and extended family. Regardless of the taboo and stigma that exist with regard to intermarriage in Islam, Muslim interfaith marriages in the West arguably can be seen as microcosmic representations of positive pluralistic relations in contemporary times.

Through discussions of data collected for this research, this thesis considers the issues and ideas mentioned above as it considers the experiences of Muslims in interfaith marriages in Western societies by considering notions of gender, globalization, and religious pluralism.

Acknowledgements

I would like to start off by thanking my supervisor, Dr. Celia Rothenberg, for her continuous moral and academic support from day one of this research. Without the encouragement from Dr. Rothenberg, this work would not have been possible as her faith in my abilities always prevailed and motivated me to keep on going when writing this thesis.

I am also grateful for the contributions of my second committee member, Dr. Liyakat Takim and my third committee member, Dr. Ellen Badone. The expertise of both Dr. Takim and Dr. Badone allowed me to view my work from different lenses and provided important perspectives that have allowed for the interdisciplinary nature of this research.

I would also like to thank the participants of this study for taking time out to share their experiences for this research. Without your help, interest and concern, this thesis may have never been finished. Particularly, I would like to thank Dr. Khalid Sohail and Faizal Kayum for providing me with resources and expertise regarding Muslim interfaith marriages. Also, I would like to thank Munir Pervaiz for assisting me with starting off my data collection for this research.

I thank my parents and sister (Afshan, Munawar, and Zara) for their words of encouragement throughout the years. I am also thankful for the moral and academic support provided by Crystal, Myra, Simon, and Rachel over the last two years. Lastly, I thank Rahim for being a positive source of motivation and support (regardless of wherever you were) during both the data collection and writing process for this thesis.

Table of Contents

Chapter I: Introduction	...1
Chapter II: Gender and Interfaith Muslim Marriages	...10
Types of Non-Muslims	...10
Gender Inequality: A Result of Patriarchy	...13
Changing Roles of Women: A Need for Reformation	...16
Theological Background	...18
Islamic Religious Texts	...21
Religious Rulings and Authorities	...45
Chapter III: Globalization: Postmodern and Contemporary Identities	...58
Identity Management: Discussions of Faith Development	...62
Postmodern Muslimness	...75
Generational Differences Regarding Dating Styles and Inter-marriage	...85
Chapter IV: Pluralism: Inter-marriage as An Exemplar For Positive Relations	...98
Universality Among the Three Abrahamic Religions: Jewish and Christian Positions	...99
Pluralistic Empathy Due to Interfaith Dynamics	...104
Contemporary <i>Nikaahs</i>	...112
Muslim-Hindu Marriages	...118
Chapter V: Final Discussion	...122
Appendix A: Participant Characteristics	...126
Appendix B: Interview Questions for Muslim Interfaith Couples	...135
Appendix C: Interview Questions for Mixed Muslim Individuals	...136
Appendix D: Interview Questions for Psychotherapist	...137
Appendix E: Interview Questions for Muslim Interfaith Wedding Officiant	...138
Bibliography	...139

I

Introduction

When asked why I chose the topic of intermarriage in Islam for my thesis, I took a step back to reflect what made this relatively new phenomenon important to me. After all of the interviews were completed for this research, I revisited one interview in particular where the interviewee (participant 15) asked me the very same question of why interfaith marriages in Islam were of interest to me.

There were a few things that came up as a result of my discussion at the end of my interview with participant 15. First, she asked me about my familial experiences and I mentioned that I come from a very diverse Muslim family that is comprised of individuals of various ages, with a multitude of political views, from assorted ethnic backgrounds, and varying levels of religiosity. Second, she asked me about my family's views regarding dating outside of my religious and ethnic background and I came to the realization that I also, like several of the participants in the study, may experience some hardship if I were to date outside of my religious background or ethnicity. Third, she asked me whether I would ever change my religion to continue a relationship with someone and to that I replied, "no because that is my identity."

The stories of the participants interviewed in this research demonstrate the complexity of identity, relationships, and religiosity when being in an interfaith marriage. The experiences of Muslims in interfaith marriages in the West is a topic that I have been keen to investigate as it is an issue that has recently emerged, thus bringing forth limited understandings and methods of managing interfaith familial dynamics and postmodern identities. These limitations sparked my curiosity regarding how postmodern Muslims in

interfaith marriages or Muslims of mixed faith backgrounds in Western societies managed to maintain their sense of self and identity.

This thesis argues that interfaith marriages in Islam are microcosms of the issues faced more broadly by Muslims in the West, including changing gender relations, globalization, and inter-religious relations.

Demographic

At the outset of my research, I planned to interview only Muslim women married to Christian or Jewish men, but as my interviews progressed it was apparent that this was a difficult demographic to find. As a result, I widened my interviews to include anyone who had a Muslim background and had either an interfaith identity (having origins from a mixed religious background) or was in an interfaith marriage.

I had also originally planned to interview individuals located only within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), but I soon realized that this decision would also limit my research. While I made connections at a progressive Islamic cultural center in Toronto, which allowed me to find many Muslim women who had married non-Muslim men in the area, utilizing social media and video chatting allowed me to expand my interviewee pool. Collecting the data was also difficult initially because many individuals who fit the demographic that I was seeking (Muslims in interfaith marriages/interfaith Muslim individuals, both groups nineteen years-old and above) were hesitant to participate in the research since many of the interview questions were personal and intimate. This was another reason why I expanded the demographic and the location of the demographic. I

conducted virtual interviews throughout North America and Europe, interviews that provided me with more diverse data than if I had remained restricted to the GTA.

In this study, I considered only interfaith heterosexual marriages. Current research on interfaith Muslim marriages is in its infancy, providing an important framework for this study. Additionally, homosexuality in Islam is a topic that has minimal research literature at the present time and this demographic is also very small. The issues of homosexuality in Islam and interfaith homosexual marriages have become more apparent due to the progressiveness in certain parts of the Western World and the increase in LGBTQ rights in the West will most likely lead to productive further research and investigation.

In addition to interviewing Muslims in interfaith marriages, I also interviewed individuals with mixed Muslim and non-Muslim identities. The perspective that I received from these participants was supplementary to my data from those in interfaith marriages since individuals with Muslim and non-Muslim backgrounds gave me insight into their familial religious dynamics. These participants discussed their experiences growing up in a mixed faith household and how they negotiated their interreligious identity throughout their lives. The majority of my interviewees who are in interfaith marriages have no children or very young children. By interviewing adults with mixed Muslim and non-Muslim backgrounds, I was able to contextualize the experiences that the future children of my primary research participants may experience.

Differentiating between Muslim sects was not relevant for the purpose of this research since the individuals I interviewed did not place a strong emphasis on their identity with regard to their respective sect, but rather were more conscious of their

overarching Muslim identity. This research thus focuses on inter-religious relations between Muslims and non-Muslims rather than intra-religious relations between Muslims of different sects. Intra-religious Muslim marriages in the West, however, could be a topic to consider in the future.

Overall, there were twenty-one participants in my study. These participants included: one psychotherapist previously from a Muslim background specializing in intermarriage; one wedding officiant who performs interfaith marriages among Muslims; two interfaith Muslim individuals; eleven Muslim women who had married non-Muslim men; three Muslim men who had married non-Muslim women; and three interfaith Muslim couples (interviews where both partners were interviewed). The interviewees were diverse and consisted of Muslims marrying a range of non-Muslims from a wide array of geographic locations in Canada, the U.S., Europe, and Asia.

Within the following chapters, I refer to each participant by their participant number, so I have provided an organized compilation of the participants in Appendix A at the end of this thesis.

Interview Questions

My research focuses on the ways that Muslims in interfaith marriages negotiate their religious identities and personal religiosity while married to non-Muslim partners. Many Muslims living in non-Muslim countries have struggled with the relationship between their religious identity and their Western identity. Throughout my interviews, this issue emerged frequently and demonstrated how Muslims in interfaith marriages are

compelled to manage their identities and religiosity as part of being married to a non-Muslim partner.

There were four different sets of interview questions that were used for this research: a set for Muslims individuals and couples in interfaith marriages, a set for individuals with mixed Muslim identities, a set for the psychotherapist interviewed for the study, and a set for the wedding officiant interviewed for the study. These interviews are attached at the end of this thesis (Appendices B, C, D, and E).

Consequently, my interview questions revolved around the themes of identity and religiosity. Key questions included: How religious are you now in comparison to before you were involved with your partner? What are your personal religious beliefs? How do they differ from your religious upbringing?

My research also looks at sociocultural factors contributing to religious identities. Many of the participants in my study identified as “cultural,” rather than religious, Muslims and participated in religious activities for the cultural component that they provided. For example, a common reason given for why interviewees participated in their religious activities is that it is a way for the family to get together and be in one place. These religious traditions are thus centered more on sociocultural aspects than specifically religious aspects.

Questions that I asked related to these practices included: What are some religious/spiritual activities that you participate in regularly? Do you and your children (if applicable) participate in the religious activities/holidays of your partner? Do your partner and your children (if applicable) participate in your religious activities/holidays?

A common pattern that emerged within my interviews was that interviewees must face numerous hurdles when discussing intermarriage with their immediate and extended family and managing their feelings and criticisms regarding marrying out. Relevant questions that explored the role of the participant's family included: How did family and friends respond when you announced your engagement? Did your friends or family respond negatively or try and dissuade you from marrying? How do your friends and family currently view your marriage?

I also examined the impact of having children within a Muslim intermarriage. An interesting trend found was that many couples expecting children or with children demonstrated higher levels of self-consciousness of their religiosity and concerns about their children's Muslim identity compared to interviewees who did not have children. Questions that probed how children influence Muslim intermarriages were: Did you and your partner discuss how you intended to raise your children prior to marriage or before you had your children? Did your friends and family ask how you intended to raise your children prior to marriage or before you had your children? Have you decided that your children will follow a particular religion, religion(s), or no religion? What factors have influenced you to raise your children in a specific faith, multi-faith, or non-religious familial environment? Are there any specific incidents or life events that have influenced how you wish to raise your children?

The interview questions also sought information in order to analyze the maintenance of religious identity after intermarriage. Some factors that the questions investigated were personal religiosity, socio-cultural influences, clashes between individualistic and collectivist ideals, and parenting interfaith children. These topics are

all related to the three themes that I intend to consider within this thesis: gender, globalization, and pluralism.

Discussion of Chapters

Within this thesis, I will consider how historical, patriarchal interpretations of Islam are being challenged by the realities of the contemporary roles of Muslim women; how globalization has led to the emergence of new, intersecting identities for Muslims in the West; and how the phenomenology of God and religious hierarchies influence Muslims' understandings of pluralism today.

Chapter One examines the theological reasoning behind the special scrutiny and controversy over a Muslim female marrying out in comparison to a Muslim male. Historically, it was the Muslim husband who was perceived to be in charge of providing for the family and it is for this reason that the Qur'an makes males the protectors and managers of the affairs of the Muslim wife.¹ Whether this is the case now is questionable as there have been increased rights and freedoms for women in the West. The increased independence and ambitions of Muslim women have demonstrated that the prohibition of interfaith marriages for women may be unjust and impractical when residing in the West due their minority status in non-Muslim countries.² My research showed that it was a possibility for Muslim women to be successfully married to non-Muslim men. It is also important to note that when Muslim women in my study were asked about their viewpoints of Islamic texts on intermarriage, majority of them gave answers that exhibited feminist understandings.

¹ The Qur'an, *An-Nisa* 4:34 (Sahih International).

² See also: Shammai Fishman, "Fiqh al-Aqalliyat: A Legal Theory for Muslim Minorities," *Research on Monographs on the Muslim World* 1, no. 2 (2006).

Chapter Two explores the influences of globalization on Islam and Muslim exogamy. Muslims in the West are in contact with multiple races and religions and as a result, they have increased chances of marrying out. Globalization has also played a significant role in the changing and complex identities of Muslims in the West. Oftentimes, young Muslims in the West experience a clash between their parental authority figures and their own sense of individuality. Many young Muslims feel that they are torn between their individual identity and the identity stemming from and expected of them by their families. When considering young-Muslim women, for example, many perceive that there is a lack of suitable potential marriage partners. The demographic of young-Muslim women in the West is now more career-oriented, educated, and marrying later than they traditionally would, which contributes to a marriage imbalance between Muslim men and Muslim women in the West, as Muslim men have a higher availability of potential partners as a result of the larger dating pool.

Chapter Three demonstrates how Muslim interfaith marriages can be seen as a microcosm of positive religious pluralism. Within the data collected for this research, it was evident that the non-Muslim partners of the marriage along with their families became more open to and inclusive of to Islam. This open-mindedness and inclusivity implies that Muslim interfaith marriages break common, negative stereotypes of Islam that are predominantly portrayed in the media. Additionally, the interfaith marriage ceremonies of the participants themselves can be argued to be representations of inclusivity and plurality.

Majority of the participants interviewed are Muslims who had married non-Muslim partners who were *Ahl al-kitab*. However, a small pool of the participants were

Muslims who had married Hindus. There tended to be more negative reactions to Muslim-Hindu interfaith marriages by extended family members than intermarriages between Muslims and *Ahl al-kitab* because of (1) complete prohibition of Muslim-polytheistic marriages in Islam and surprisingly, (2) sociopolitical differences. This data will be further addressed in Chapter Three as well.

II

Gender and Interfaith Muslim Marriages

Muslims have recently been increasingly crossing ethnic, religious, and social barriers within modern Western societies. As a result of these migration patterns, the rate of interfaith marriages within the Muslim minority in the West has continued to increase, which has generated several controversial issues. One of these controversies includes the exogamy of Muslim women. Within primary Islamic sources, there has been reference to relations between Muslims and *Ahl al-kitab* (“The People of the Book”), which brings forth the argument whether Muslim women would at least be permitted to marry Jewish and Christian men. Islamic literature concerning marriages between Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men is subjective and indirect. As a result, many Muslims living as minorities in the West (particularly Muslim women) feel that the issue of intermarriage in Islam needs to be clarified using a more contemporary framework. This chapter will consider primary Islamic literature regarding intermarriage among Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men along with contemporary *fiqh* and *fatawa* discussed by present day Islamic authorities and scholars through a feminist lens.

Before discussing primary Islamic literature regarding intermarriage, it may be beneficial to consider the different types of non-Muslims mentioned in Islamic religious texts; the historical influence of patriarchy in Islamic societies; and the shift in Muslim women’s social roles to provide context for the ideas analyzed within this chapter.

Types of Non-Muslims

Based on the *Kitab-un-Nikah* by Sheikh Abdurraghiem Sallie,³ there are three prominent types of non-believers: *mushrikeen*, *majoos*, and *Ahl al-kitab*.⁴ I will be using Sheikh Abdurraghiem Sallie's discussion of the three types of non-believers since he provides a clear, consolidated list that corresponds appropriately with the topic of intermarriage in Islam.

1. *Mushrikeen*

The first group is referred to as the *mushrikeen*. These are individuals who have not received any authoritative, heavenly scriptures, and are considered to be idol worshippers and polytheists.⁵ Marriages between Muslims and *mushrikeen* are prohibited because Islam frowns upon idolatry and polytheism. Each verse within the Qur'an that prohibits interfaith marriage specifically refers to *mushrik*, which can be classified as the class of non-Muslims that includes polytheists, idolaters, and atheists.⁶

2. *Majoos*

The second group is referred to as *majoos*, who lived mainly in Persia and the eastern Arabian Peninsula in the pre-Islamic period.⁷ The original ontology of the term *majoos* refers to Zoroastrians (particularly Zoroastrian priests).⁸ Intermarriage between Muslims and *majoos* is subjective as some Islamic scholars have argued that such marriages may be permissible.

3. *Ahl al-kitab*

³ Sheikh Abdurraghiem Sallie was one of the most prolific Islamic scholars in South Africa and was a *hafiz* teacher and *fiqh* scholar.

⁴ Sheikh Abdurraghiem Sallie, *Kitab-un-Nikah: The Book on Muslim Marriage* (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 2001).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁶ Alex B. Leeman, "Interfaith Marriage in Islam: An Examination of the Legal Theory Behind the Traditional and Reformist Positions," *Indiana Law Journal* 83, no. 743 (2009), 758.

⁷ Anwer M. Zanyat, *Glossary of Islamic Terms*. (Jeddah: Al-Khairat, 2006), 131.

⁸ Vesta S. Curtis & Sarah Stewart (eds.), *Birth of the Persian Empire: The Idea of Iran Vol. 1* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1995), 92.

The third group is referred to as *Ahl al-kitab*, which translates to “the People of the Book.” Individuals who fall under *Ahl al-kitab* include *Yahood* (Jews), who follow the Torah, and *Nasaaraa* (Christians), who follow the Bible.⁹ Marriage to *Ahl al-kitab* by Muslims is permitted, but under certain rules:

It is permissible to marry a Muslim to a *Kitaabiyah*. However, the rule states that it is haram for a Muslim female to marry a member of this group. The condition which is a pre-requisite for the correctness of the marriage of a Muslim woman is that her husband must be a Muslim. Proof of this is obtained from the Holy Qur’an.¹⁰

A proportion of *ulama* agree on marriages between Muslims and *Ahl al-kitab* because the Torah and the Bible are deemed heavenly books from heavenly religions by Allah.¹¹

The reason behind this sympathetic view of Jews and Christians in Islam is attributable to their similar notions of monotheism. However, *Ahl al-kitab* are sometimes argued to include Zoroastrians as well:

Ahl al-kitab means, ‘Possessors of the Scripture’ or ‘People of the Book.’ It is the term used for the people who profess a religion recognized by Islam to have been of divine origin. Among these people are the Jews (*al-Yahud*), Christians (*al-Nasara*), Sabaeans (*al-Sabi’un*) and Zoroastrians or Magians (*al-Majus*).¹²

Also, Rashid Rida, an Egyptian Islamic scholar (1865-1935), widened the definition of *Ahl al-kitab* to include Zoroastrianism as well as Hinduism and Buddhism from India and China.¹³ Rashid Rida contends that this should be the case because their holy scriptures promote the oneness of God.¹⁴

⁹ Sheikh Abdraghieem Sallie, *Kitab-un-Nikah*, 109.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 110.

¹² M.A. Muhibbu-Din, “*Ahl al-Kitab* and Religious Minorities in the Islamic State: Historical Context and Contemporary Challenges,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 20, no. 1 (2000), 111.

¹³ Zahidul Islam, “Interfaith Marriage in Islam and Present Situation,” *Global Journal of Politics and Law Research* 2, no. 1 (2014), 41.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Traditionally, however, *Ahl al-kitab* have only included Jews and Christians. Muslim men are permitted to marry Jewish or Christian women, but Muslim women are prohibited from marrying Jewish or Christian men. This prohibition is now considered to be arguable in contemporary Western societies where some Muslims identify the patriarchal interpretations of Islamic authoritative texts, including the Qur'an and *hadith* literature, as problematic.

Gender Inequality: A Result of Patriarchy

In the history of Islam, women questioned the Prophet Muhammad as to why the Qur'an addressed men only when women had also made their surrender to God. The result was a revelation that addressed women as well as men and emphasized the moral and spiritual equality of the sexes:

Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, the men who guard their private parts and the women who do so, and the men who remember Allah often and women who do so – for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great award.¹⁵

This verse demonstrates a sense of equality among Muslim men and Muslim women. However, traditional interpretations of the Qur'an implicate patriarchal tones and an androcentric focus and have often been criticized by feminist exegetes. Karen Armstrong notes: “Unfortunately, as in Christianity, the religion [Islam] was later hijacked by the men, who interpreted texts in a way that was negative for Muslim women.”¹⁶

¹⁵ *Al-Ahzab* 33:35.

¹⁶ Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994), 158.

Historically, men became the ones to interpret the Qur'an and this is why the prohibition of interfaith marriages for women in Islam is now contemplated.

When considered from a feminist perspective, the Qur'an can be seen as a continuation of the Abrahamic message and as such, it also exhibits an underlying patriarchal value-system similar to prior Abrahamic texts. Females within the traditional Muslim family remained, for all of the amelioration of their status that Islam brought, subordinate to the males within the traditional Muslim family.¹⁷ For example, verse 33:5 in the Qur'an states: "Call them by [the names] of their fathers,"¹⁸ which demonstrates the significance of patrilineage in the Qur'an and within Islam. In traditional Islamic societies, the male was in charge of providing for the family. As a result, the Qur'an makes males the protectors and the managers of the affairs of the wife. This is further demonstrated within verse 4:34: "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because of that which God has favoured one above the other, and because they support them from their means."¹⁹ Exegetes of feminist *tafsir* employ the *tawhidic* paradigm (an interpretative method that places emphasis on the doctrine of God's unity and incomparability) to assert that sexism is a form of idolatry since it attributes a God-like role to men over women.²⁰

In pre-Islamic Arabia, women were viewed as property rather than as humans equal to males according to John Esposito: "Women's status in pre-Islamic Arabia was reflected in the predominant marriage agreement, a contract that closely resembled a sale through which women became the property of her husband. She was obliged to follow

¹⁷ Mohammed Khaleel, "Sex, Sexuality and Family in the Qur'an," in *Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 299.

¹⁸ *Al-Ahzab* 33:5.

¹⁹ *An-Nisa* 4:34.

²⁰ Aysha A. Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges of the Qur'an* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 110.

him to his tribe and to bear his children who were considered to be of his blood.”²¹

Women and children were both seen to be the property of the Muslim head of the family, the male.

One reason for this subservient view of women was related to honour since the family honour was understood as directly related to the uprightness of the women within the family. Strong emphasis was placed on the chastity and potential fidelity of a woman, thus, her family strictly limited her behaviour in order to ensure her reputation and consequently the honour of the family.²² Dr. Khalid Sohail mentions within his interview for this research:

Religion and sexuality come together in the marriage, so the dating is not only dating that is pre-marital sex with a person who is not from your religion, so the pressure is higher. One is that you are dating and two is that you are sexually active and third you are sexually active with a man who is non-Muslim and if you break-up then you are likely to face more repercussions in the Muslim community because you are a woman. I think that Muslim families and communities take women’s sexuality as a pride and the males want to control it, which is problematic and a result of unresolved innate gender imbalances within Islam as a whole.

Although the structure of the Muslim family has shifted within the West and the rights of women have increased, the direct relationship between a woman’s reputation and the family’s honour still exists as a result of generational patriarchal undertones within Islam.

The marriage of dominion in ancient Arabia produced a situation in which a woman was subjugated by males, her father, or close male relatives when she was a virgin and then her husband when she became a wife.²³ Women had few rights in pre-Islamic Arabia, but this has changed since women are now able to be independent entities that are not constrained or influenced by their male relatives, particularly within the

²¹ John L. Esposito, *Women in Muslim Family Law* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1982), 14.

²² John L. Esposito, *Women in Muslim Family Law*, 14.

²³ Ibid.

West. Nevertheless, these structured gender roles for males and females have largely endured within Muslim societies. For example, Kulczycki and Lobo's study on Arab-American intermarriage in the United States discusses how modern Arab cultural traditions are heavily patriarchal with very clear role differentiation between men and women.²⁴ As a result, Arab immigrant families tend to place greater cultural constraints on their daughters when it comes to marital choices.²⁵

Marriage itself is seen as crucial in Islam as it is central to the growth and stability of the basic unity of society, the Muslim family. Esposito claims that the Muslim family is "the means by which the world is populated with Muslims to concretize and realize God's will in history."²⁶ If marriage is of such high importance in Islam, it theoretically could be argued that Muslim women involved in relationships with non-Muslim men should consider marriage to fulfill the duty to marry and procreate. Additionally, they would be contributing to the spread of Islam, given that their children are raised Muslim. Many traditional Muslim families, however, believe that men are largely responsible for spreading the religion.

Changing Roles of Women: A Need For Reformation

It is evident that patriarchal tones exist in most institutionalized religions and Islam is no exception. Notions of patriarchy within institutionalized religions sometimes become normalized by some women within their everyday lives due to learned behaviour, while others recognize these biases and struggle to make their own voices

²⁴ Andrzej Kulczycki & Arun Peter Lobo, "Patterns, Determinants, and Implications of Intermarriage Among Arab Americans," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64, no. 1 (2002), 209.

²⁵ Barbara Aswad & Barbara Bilge, *Family and Gender Among American Muslims: Issues Facing Middle Eastern Immigrants and Their Descendants*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996).

²⁶ John L. Esposito, *Women in Muslim Family Law*, 15.

heard. The fact, however, remains that it is mostly men who dictate what women can and cannot do within religious contexts²⁷ and intermarriage is no exception.

Muslim women's changing social roles have been a strong contributing factor in attempts to reform Islamic family law. Traditionally, the primary role of Muslim women has been that of wife and mother living within the extended family in a patriarchal society. Esposito states that "Islamic laws set the standards regarding women's rights and duties; modern reforms have been advocated as seeking to protect and improve women's status and rights in a changing society with its movement from the extended family to a more nuclear family."²⁸ This shift from living within the extended family to a more nuclear family is a result of Westernization, secularization, and globalization. This shift also can be tied back to the change from Muslims living in a more collectivist society to a more individualistic one.

One of the biggest visible results of changing gender roles is the increased emergence of women in the workforce. Amina Wadud discusses this change within her gender inclusive reading of the Qur'an:

Across time and culture, the division of labour between men and women has exhibited some variations. Sometimes, what the men do in one society is done by women in another society. The absence of explicit Qur'anic prescriptions for dividing labour allows and supports a myriad of variations. When individual cultures decided upon or evolved divisions of labour, they had done so to achieve the ultimate advantages in their ecological context with their available human resources. Such variation similarly exists between and within individual families. Thus, mutually decided matters of contribution can be arranged within families to affect the ultimate benefits in the family and society. Not all drudgery should be arbitrarily attributed to women, nor all social, political, and economic recognition be attributed to men.²⁹

²⁷ Mary Pat Fisher, *Women in Religion*, (Toronto: Pearson Longman, 2007), 13.

²⁸ John L. Esposito, *Women in Muslim Family Law*, 10.

²⁹ Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text From a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 104.

Wadud's discussion of shifting gender roles encourages an equal negotiation of marital and familial roles. By enforcing an equal negotiation of marital and familial roles, the husband and wife would be looking out for the best interests of their marriage and their family.

The gender bias with regard to interfaith marriages in Islam is existent as a result of underlying historical contexts that emphasized and enforced the traditional roles of men and women in Islamic lands. For Muslim women born in the West, their roles are no longer limited to the traditional ones they once were. The increased independence and ambitions of Muslim women in the West have demonstrated that the prohibition of interfaith marriages for Muslim women in Islam may be impractical and based upon a biased historical understanding of men's and women's traditional roles. This will be further established within this chapter.

Theological Background

In order to better understand Islam's position regarding interfaith marriages, it is important to consider the relevant Islamic texts and rulings. The primary religious text of Islam is the canonical text of the Qur'an, which is oftentimes supplemented with a scriptural exegesis (*tafsir*) that clarifies the Arabic meanings of the text in a systematic way.³⁰ A *tafsir* analyzes the Qur'an verse-by-verse and explains any uncommon vocabulary, grammatical constructs, difficulties in determining connotations, and the sense of the passage; however, *tafsirs* do not usually lend themselves well to

³⁰ Paula Y. Skreslet, "Basic Primary Sources in Islamic Religion," *Theological Librarianship* 1, no. 1 (2008), 51.

translation.³¹ The *tafsirs* that I critically analyzed for this research are *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* by Yusuf Abdullah Ali and *In the Shade of the Qur'an* by Sayyid Qutb. I utilized Ali and Qutb's *tafsirs* for my research because they were both popular *tafsirs* that were available in English.

This criticism regarding *tafsirs* not lending themselves well to translation is one that is often voiced by feminist exegetes. Scholars of feminist *tafsir* use the *tawhidic* paradigm to argue that human interpretations of the Qur'an are not equivalent to the Qur'anic text; thereby they dispute that interpretations of the Qur'an that are demeaning to women are prone to error and open to criticism due to their human authorship.³² The *tawhidic* paradigm asserts that sexism is a form of idolatry since it puts men in a God-like role over women.³³ *Tawhid* is a core Islamic concept that discusses the unity and incomparability of the doctrine of God. Khaled Abou El Fadl argues that when readers are reading a *tafsir*, "the reader is able to displace the author and set himself as the sole voice of authority. In essences, the reader becomes God."³⁴ This contradicts the *tawhidic* principle that no one shares the authority of God. Hidayatullah mentions that this concept also informs the exegetes' position that classical interpretations are not immutable and should be continually revised.³⁵ Essentially, human beings cannot do more than attempt to understand the Qur'an and God's mandates and engage in a continual search for understanding the Qur'an. Since complete understanding of the Qur'an belongs solely to God, humans are never able to produce a finalized and perfect interpretation of the

³¹ Paula Y. Skreslet, "Basic Primary Sources in Islamic Religion," 51.

³² Aysha Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges of the Qur'an*, 116.

³³ *Ibid.*, 110.

³⁴ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority, and Women*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), 265.

³⁵ Aysha Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges of the Qur'an*, 118.

Qur'an, all they can really do is engage in an ongoing process of trying to understand the text, however imperfectly.³⁶ Feminist *tafsirs* and interpretations of the Qur'an fill-in-the-gap regarding understandings of Islam that challenge patriarchal views.

The ambiguity of Qur'anic verses create variations in interpretation. As a result, there are differences regarding viewpoints amongst the *ummah* of Muslims (*ummat al-Islamiyah*). This is another effect of the globalization of Islam since there is a range of other constructs that contribute to the differences amongst the global Muslim community, such as location. When considering the issue of exogamy of Muslim women, it is important to note that viewpoints of traditional interpreters differ from feminist ones when discussing the issue. Additionally, the Arabic language of the Qur'an employs the grammatical gendering of nouns and the use of male pronouns to refer to God, thus giving a very androcentric tone within the religious text.³⁷ This can also create variation as interpretations of the text, whether traditional or feminist, can be subjective as it is difficult to accurately interpret the Qur'an. For example, feminist linguists argue that the Qur'an is androcentric and that "only males, and conservative males at that" have written classical exegeses of the Qur'an.³⁸

Another significant religious source in Islam are *ahadith*, which are the classical sources of information about the *sunna* of the Prophet that were spread through oral tradition by an original witness.³⁹ Once again, it is important to keep in mind the subjective nature of *ahadith* as historic witnesses orally communicate them to the Muslim community. Qur'anic and *ahadith* verses and narratives pertaining to intermarriage in

³⁶ Aysha Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges of the Qur'an*, 118.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

³⁸ Asma Barlas, "*Believing Women*" in *Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 116.

³⁹ Paula Y. Skreslet, "Basic Primary Sources in Islamic Religion," 50.

Islam, particularly those considering intermarriages of Muslim women, will be analyzed here.

Relevant Islamic laws pertaining to the issue of intermarriage within Islam and of Muslim women will be considered as well as recent *fiqh* and *fatawa*. *Fiqh* is the process of analysis and codification of the law as a human activity carried out by jurists (essentially Islamic jurisprudence).⁴⁰ A *fatwa* is a ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a recognized authority or scholar. *Fiqh al-Aqalliyat* (jurisprudence of Muslim minorities) along with its legal tools and sources (*ijtihad*, *maslaha*, *taysir*, and *urf*) and comparative *fatawa* by contemporary Islamic scholars regarding intermarriages in Islam will be analyzed and specifically the exogamy of Muslim women will be considered.

Islamic Religious Texts

The Qur'an

There are three crucial verses within the Qur'an that pertain to interfaith relations and marriages within Islam. I will consider all three of these verses and give my own critique of contemporary interpretations of the verses by 20th century exegetes of the Qur'an from a feminist lens. Data collected for this research will also supplement *tafsirs* of the three verses considered and demonstrate differences between the jurisdictions of exegetes and the experiences of Muslim women married to non-Muslim men in the West.

1. *Al-Baqarah* 2:221

The first verse discusses the prohibition of marriages amongst all Muslims, regardless of gender, to individuals classified as *mushrikeen*:

⁴⁰ Paula Y. Skreslet, "Basic Primary Sources in Islamic Religion," 51.

And do not marry polytheistic women until they believe. And a believing slave woman is better than a polytheist, even though she might please you. And do not marry polytheistic men [to your women] until they believe. And a believing slave is better than a polytheist, even though he might please you. Those invite [you] to the Fire, but Allah invites to Paradise and to forgiveness, by His permission. And he makes clear His verses to the people that perhaps they may remember).⁴¹

Both Yusuf Ali and Sayyid Qutb (two 20th century exegetes of the Qur'an) discuss interfaith relations among Muslims from similar perspectives along with other relative questions that arise as a result of this verse.

Yusuf Ali's interpretation of this verse is based on the importance of intimate spiritual harmony. Under verse 2:221, he writes:

Marriage is a most intimate connection, and the mystery of sex finds its highest fulfillment when intimate spiritual harmony is combined with the physical link. If religion is at all a real influence in life to both parties or to either party, a difference in this vital matter must affect the lives of both more profoundly than differences of birth, race, language, or position in life. It is therefore right that the parties to be married should have the same spiritual outlook. If two persons love each other, their outlook in the highest things of life must be the same.⁴²

What Ali is implying is that intimacy is not merely just a physical link, but rather a physical link combined with spiritual harmony. He believes that if two people truly love each other, their views will coincide in every way, including in terms of religion. He emphasizes that differences between race, language, and position in life are not as important and detrimental as differences between religion and spiritual outlook. Spiritual intimacy is the only way a marriage can have a stable foundation according to Ali. He also mentions the issue of conversion in mixed religious unions:

Note that religion is not here a mere label or a matter of custom or birth. The two persons may have been born in different religions, but if, by their mutual influence, they come to see the truth in the same way, they must openly accept the

⁴¹ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:221.

⁴² Yusuf Abdullah Ali, *The Meaning of The Holy Qur'an*, (Beltsville: Amana Publications, 1997), 89.

same rites and the same social brotherhood. Otherwise the position will become impossible individually and socially.⁴³

Ali believes that if an interfaith union were to happen between a Muslim and a non-Muslim, they must accept one religion in order to achieve complete spiritual intimacy within a relationship/marriage. Ali's stand on *Al-Baqarah* 2:221 is that marriage is more than just a physical connection and when it comes down to what is valued the most in such a bond it is spiritual intimacy. Spiritual intimacy cannot be obtained if there is a marriage between two individuals who come from different faiths and religions; if two individuals are truly in love they should have similar outlooks on major issues in life.

Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of this verse is based upon spiritual intimacy as well.

Regarding verse 2:221, he writes:

From then on, marriages involving Muslims and pagans [in this case, polytheists] were prohibited, as such unions were considered devoid of spiritual meaning and non-deserving of God's blessings or consecration, since the parties involved did not share the same beliefs and outlook on life. Having honoured mankind, God does not want marriage to be based on mere physical attraction. It is a bond that is closely related to the divine system for human life.⁴⁴

Both Ali and Qutb emphasize how marriage is not to be based on merely a physical attraction/union, but rather must incorporate spiritual intimacy as well. Qutb goes on further to explain the justification of how this verse implicates the prohibition of Muslim women marrying *Ahl al-kitab* men:

Muslim women, however, are forbidden from marrying Jewish or Christian men. The two cases are different, meriting different verdicts. Under Islamic law, children are called by their father's names. It is the practice in all societies that, after a marriage, a woman joins the household of her husband. If a Muslim man married a Christian or Jewish woman, she would move to the town or country where he lived, and join the rest of his family, and their children would take the father's name and grow up in his religious and cultural environment. The situation would be reversed in the case of a Muslim woman marrying a Jewish or Christian

⁴³ Yusuf Abdullah Ali, *The Meaning of The Holy Qur'an*, 89.

⁴⁴ Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an* vol. 1, (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1999), 296.

man, where the children would be raised in a non-Muslim culture and most likely grow up to be non-Muslims.⁴⁵

Qutb believes that the reason for the prohibition of marriages between Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men is justifiable on the basis that the offspring of such a union end up as non-Muslims. The points that Qutb makes with regards to *Al-Baqarah* 2:221 are that spiritual intimacy is an important component of a marriage; two individuals from two different religions can only have physical intimacy; and that the prohibition of marriages between Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men is justifiable since there will most likely be a disturbance in the Muslim patrilineage of the children produced as a result of such a marriage.

Regarding the interpretations of *Al-Baqarah* 2:221, both of these exegetes make arguments can be critiqued when considered from a contemporary point of view and a feminist lens.

First, both Yusuf Ali and Sayyid Qutb make the argument that spiritual intimacy is crucial within a marriage. Although it is important to form a union based on similar levels of religiosity, it is not necessarily the case that both individuals must be from the same religion. For example, Dr. Khalid Sohail had a Muslim background but identified as an Atheist and Humanist and his partner is a woman from a Christian background:

She has a Catholic/Christian background. So I think one of the things that I found was my issue with the word religion. People might say that I am Muslim, but I felt that my interests lined up more with Atheism. So you would think I am Muslim, but you would ask me and I would tell you that I am an Atheist. My partner is not a practicing Christian and I am not a practicing Muslim, so we get along better. Just being a Christian or a Muslim is not an issue, it is how strong your beliefs are translated in your behaviour and practices, and how much you want to insist.

⁴⁵ Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an* vol. 1, 297.

Spiritual harmony is achievable by two individuals from two different religions, especially within pluralistic Western societies. In fact, there may be more problematic issues between two individuals who are from the same religion (which will be further discussed in following chapter).

Second, Yusuf Ali makes the argument that even if there were to be a marital union between two individuals of different religions and they did spiritually align and have similar views, they must accept the same religion otherwise it will cause a negative impact on their union. This is contradictory as demonstrated by the participant above, who has a different religious background but shares similar moral and spiritual views with his partner. In their union, there would be no reason for either individual to change religions in order to make the relationship work. They are already in spiritual harmony because of their similar outlook on life and there is no clear evidence that there would be a negative impact on their union because of their different religious identities.

Finally, Sayyid Qutb adds onto the analysis of this verse that Muslim men are not prohibited from marrying Christian or Jewish women because Muslims, Christians, and Jews share a fundamental belief in God's oneness and monotheism (*tawhid*). He acknowledges that this verse does not necessarily implicate a prohibition between Muslims and *Ahl al-kitab*. However, he makes this gender-specific and says that although Muslim men are permitted to marry *Ahl al-kitab* women, marriages between Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men are prohibited. His arguments behind this are that the children of such a marriage would be raised non-Muslim and that the Muslim female would lose her Muslim status since she would join a Christian or Jewish household. In modernity, married couples often do not live with their families and in-laws, a fact which

allows couples to have more independence and freedom. Participant 10 exhibited a different pattern than what Qutb hypothesized for Muslim women who married non-Muslim men. She is from a very conservative Muslim background that she describes as “very Salafi and Wahabbi.” She made sure that her household was Muslim and her *iman* (faith) remained unaffected by her marriage to a Christian male:

Whenever we talked about having kids, I always said that they were going to be Muslim because I’m more of the bossy personality and he’s more passive. I felt like that it was my duty for them to be Muslim, that was just it and it was important, I fought for my children. So I always said that that was how it was going to be. Sort of that you don’t have a say in it [*laughs*].

Here we see the Muslim woman dictating the faith dynamics within her household. This practice was common among multiple participants within this research: Many of the Muslim had the role of primary caregiver and faith educator for their children.

2. *Al-Ma'idah* 5:5

The second verse taken into consideration here discusses interfaith relations between Muslims and *Ahl al-kitab*:

This day [all] good foods have been made lawful, and the food of those who were given the Scripture [The People of the Book] is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them. And [lawful in marriage are] chaste women from among the believers and chaste women from among those who were given the Scripture before you, when you have given them their due compensation, desiring chastity, not unlawful sexual intercourse or taking [secret] lovers. And whoever denies the faith – his work has become worthless, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.⁴⁶

The following verse considers positive relations between Muslims and *Ahl al-kitab*. Specifically, it makes food and marriage amongst Muslims and *Ahl al-kitab* lawful. It explains how “chaste women from among the believers” (chaste Muslim women) and “chaste women from among those who were given the Scripture before you” (chaste *Ahl*

⁴⁶ *Al-Ma'idah*, 5:5.

al-kitab women) are lawful for marriage partners for Muslim men. Some interpretations of this verse discuss what the permissive grounds are for marital unions amongst Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men. Both Yusuf Ali and Sayyid Qutb discuss pluralistic relations amongst Muslims and *Ahl al-kitab* from related yet varied perspectives and address other relevant questions that arise as a result of this verse.

Yusuf Ali's interpretation of this verse is that Muslim men are permitted to marry *Ahl al-kitab* women as long as they do so under the same conditions as if they were marrying Muslim women:

Islam is not exclusive. Social intercourse, including inter-marriage, is permitted with the People of the Book. A Muslim man may marry a woman from their ranks on the same terms as he would marry a Muslim woman, i.e., he must give her an economic and moral status, and must not be activated merely by motives of lust or physical desire.⁴⁷

The marriage between a Muslim male and *Ahl al-kitab* female is permissible under the circumstance that the Muslim male would be able to financially and ethically provide for her. Also, the sole reason for the marriage must not be motivated by physical attraction. This motivation concerning physical attraction can relate to what Yusuf Ali states about *Al-Baqarah* 2:221; importance must be placed on spiritual intimacy over physical intimacy. Ali highlights the capability of the Muslim male to financially and ethically support the *Ahl al-kitab* female as well. He then goes on to make this rule gender-specific and provides his reasoning for why Muslim men are permitted to marry *Ahl al-kitab* women, but Muslim women are prohibited from marrying *Ahl al-kitab* men:

A Muslim woman may not marry a non-Muslim man, because her Muslim status would be affected: the wife ordinarily takes the nationality and status given by her husband's law. A non-Muslim woman marrying a Muslim husband would be expected eventually to accept Islam. Any man or woman, of any race or faith,

⁴⁷ Yusuf Abdullah Ali, *The Meaning of The Holy Qur'an*, 246.

may, on accepting Islam, freely marry any Muslim woman or man, provided it be from motives of purity and chastity and not of lewdness.⁴⁸

Ali's reason as to why Muslim women cannot marry any non-Muslim men (including *Ahl al-kitab*) is because men carry legal status and the wife ordinarily takes the nationality and status of her husband. Thus, if a Muslim marries a non-Muslim man, the status and nationality of the Muslim woman would change to a non-Muslim one. Ali's interpretation further explains how, even in the case of marriage between Muslim men and *Ahl al-kitab* women, the non-Muslim woman would eventually be expected to convert to Islam. He asserts that any union for a Muslim is possible if the spouse (of any race or faith) converts to Islam. Ali's understanding of this verse thus argues that Muslim men are permitted to marry *Ahl al-kitab* women as long as the men are able to provide for the women and their motives behind the marriage is not purely a physical one, but Muslim women are prohibited from marrying *Ahl al-kitab* men because such a marriage would cause the women's status and nationality to change from a Muslim one to a non-Muslim one.

Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of this verse is more universal than Yusuf Ali's interpretation. In Qutb's view, this verse ultimately looks at the positive relations between Muslims and *Ahl al-kitab* and Qutb bases his interpretation of this verse entirely on this premise. The main principle that he emphasizes is that only malevolent things are prohibited for Muslims:

Again the variety of permissible pleasures are initially described as good: "Today all the good things of life have been made lawful to you." This emphasizes the meaning we have already stressed, explaining that only evil things have been forbidden to Muslims. Within the framework of making good things lawful, we witness a genuine manifestation of Islamic tolerance when it comes to dealing with non-Muslim communities living side by side with Muslims in the land of

⁴⁸ Yusuf Abdullah Ali, *The Meaning of The Holy Qur'an*, 246.

Islam [*dar al-Islam*], or perhaps having a relationship based on a peace treaty or one of simple loyalty.⁴⁹

Qutb's view emphasizes tolerance of pluralism. Tolerance is particularly stressed within relations between Muslims and *Ahl al-kitab*, which is probably explained by the shared value of monotheism and interconnectivity among the three of the Abrahamic religions. This position refutes Yusuf Ali's argument that non-Muslim individuals should convert to Islam after marrying their Muslim spouses. Qutb highlights the importance of non-Muslims living harmoniously with Muslims in a peaceful, non-threatening manner. The discussion of spiritual intimacy also arises with Qutb's interpretation of this verse. Qutb addresses this question in his view of honest wedlock:

The same conditions apply to lawful marriages with either virtuous Muslim women or virtuous women of the followers of other Divine religions: "When you give them their dowers, taking them in honest wedlock, not in fornication, nor as mistresses." (Verse 5) This means that a dower must be paid for a serious, lawful marriage by which a man provides his wife with a home, security and protection. The money paid must never be used for an illegitimate relationship that makes a woman available to any man as a prostitute or only to one man as a mistress. Both types were known in pre-Islamic Arabia and recognized by Arabian society prior to its purification by Islam.⁵⁰

This view echoes Yusuf Ali's interpretation of this verse. Qutb also believes that marriages with *Ahl al-kitab* women are permissible given that Muslim men can provide for the women and not be involved in such a union only for the purposes of physical needs. Qutb mentions that illegitimate marriages were known and recognized in pre-Islamic Arabia, thus emphasizing the importance Islam places on spiritual intimacy. Similar to Ali, Qutb points to the significance and consequences of individuals who reject their *iman*:

⁴⁹ Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an* vol. 4, (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1999), 30.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

A person who abandons them [regulations related to *iman*] rejects the faith altogether. Hence, all his actions will be to no avail. Indeed, whatever good he may do will be rejected by God. This state of affairs, i.e. the rejection of the actions of one who denies the faith, is described in the Qur'an in terms of what may happen to an animal which grazes in a poisonous area. Its belly is greatly swollen and it dies. This is a perfect description of what is rejected of a man's actions. It swells, but it comes to nothing. In the life to come, such a person suffers a loss that comes on top of his vain actions.⁵¹

Qutb implies that rejection of faith will result in negative effects within one's life. This view demonstrates the importance placed on spiritual intimacy since the main focus within the verse is that marrying purely for physical attraction and lewdness is prohibited. In conclusion, Qutb's interpretation of this verse emphasizes the importance of religious pluralism within Muslim and *Ahl al-kitab* communities, spiritual intimacy, and the consequences of rejection of *iman*.

The differences in the interpretations of this verse by these exegetes (and others not mentioned here) signify the impossibility of perfectly understanding the Qur'an as a human. The *tafsirs* presented by Yusuf Ali and Sayyid Qutb for *Al-Ma'idah* 5:5 can thus be critically evaluated in light of present societal circumstances.

First, both Yusuf Ali and Sayyid Qutb argue that Muslim men are permitted to marry *Ahl al-kitab* women as long as the Muslim men are able to provide for the women economically and morally. What Ali and Qutb fail to recognize and sufficiently explain is the gender-specificity and bias behind their interpretations. The ontology behind Ali and Qutb's interpretations can be understood as a result of the androcentric language that is used within primary Islamic texts, a result of the patriarchy that was evident in the time the Qur'an was codified and Arabic grammatical constructs. If the verse were to be considered from a gender-neutral context and feminist perspective, it could be argued that

⁵¹ Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an* vol. 4, 31.

the Qur'an does not explicitly prohibit unions between Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men.

Second, Ali argues that a key reason for the prohibition of Muslim women marrying *Ahl al-kitab* men is that Muslim women would lose their nationality and status and take on that of her *Ahl al-kitab* husband. This argument closely resembles the argument that Ali made in his interpretation of the previous verse, in which he stated that the Muslim woman would move into the non-Muslim man's household and thus, raise her children with a lack of Muslim influences and also lose her faith as a result of the non-Muslim influences around her. Ali implies that males are the heads of the household and Muslim women married to *Ahl al-kitab* men would be swayed away from their *iman*. However, the data collected for the research demonstrates that many Muslim women who are married to non-Muslim partners have had an impact on their partner's faith. In fact, it can be argued that interfaith marriages between Muslim women and non-Muslim men demonstrated adaptation to and acceptance of Islam (some with hints of acculturation). For example, participant 13 joked around that she married "the colonizer" since she was a Indian-Muslim female married to a British-Anglican male:

My husband was raised in a really strong Anglican family and by really strong, I mean that they were missionaries, like my mother-in-law was born in India during colonial times as a missionary. In terms of his personal faith practice at that point in time, he was very much like an Atheist and over time in our relationship he's shifted, I can see the shifts happening that have moved him more toward Agnostic and non-practicing cultural Muslim [*laughs*].

This interviewee's experience can be seen as an example of a Muslim woman swaying her non-Muslim partner's faith. This case, thus, contradicts Ali's argument that the Muslim woman's *iman* would diminish if she were to enter a marital union with an *Ahl al-kitab* male. Further, in contemporary Western, pluralistic societies, the status or

nationality of an individual does not change as a result of an interfaith marriage. As Riley notes: “Some scholars suggest that because the status of women is different today (in the West, anyway) they are considered equal partners with their husbands and there is less cause for concern that they will compromise their faith simply because the man, the “head of the household,” instructs them to do so.”⁵² One such scholar is Khaleel Mohammed, a professor of religion at San Diego State University, who argues that conditions are different for Muslim women today and that if “women have legal rights, which include placing conditions on a marriage, then an interfaith marriage can take place on condition that neither spouse will be forcibly converted to the other’s religion.”⁵³ Khaleel’s argument demonstrates that if a Muslim woman values her *iman* there should be no reason why being in an interfaith union would influence her beliefs and values. In a marriage, respect and tolerance of each other’s *iman* is crucial for a positive relationship to be maintained; a position that corresponds with Qutb’s emphasis on positive pluralistic relations within a micro-level scale.

Lastly, Yusuf Ali argues that in order for an interfaith marriage between a Muslim and non-Muslim to be legitimate, the non-Muslim party of the union must convert to Islam. This assertion is debatable because even within the Qur’an, there is a verse that prohibits inducing non-Muslim individuals to convert: “There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong...”⁵⁴ This verse is taken by *ulama* to imply that force should not be used to convert an individual to Islam. Ali’s interpretation of this verse would involve manipulation since it would be

⁵² Naomi S. Riley, *Til Faith Do Us Part: How Interfaith Marriage is Transforming America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 34.

⁵³ Khaleel Mohammed, “Imam Khaleel Mohammed’s Defense of Inter-Faith Marriage,” *IrshadManji.com*, last modified April 2012, https://freethinkingstokie.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/eng_bothpages.pdf.

⁵⁴ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:256.

likely that the non-Muslim individual would be put in a position where they are forced to choose either their faith or the person they love and wish to marry. Faizul Kayum, an Islamic interfaith marriage expert interviewed for this research, is a marriage officiant (*kazi*) for the Noor Cultural Centre, a progressive and inclusive Islamic center in Toronto, who performs marriages between Muslim women and non-Muslim men. As a Muslim interfaith marriage officiator, he explained his views regarding conversion within Muslim interfaith marriages during his interview:

Interviewer: So do the non-Muslim partners end up converting usually?

Faizal: Only if the non-Muslim man has willingly studied the religion and then converted, only if there is no pressure whatsoever.

Interviewer: If you were performing a wedding or pre-marital counselling and you could tell that the other person was being coerced into converting would you have a discussion regarding that?

Faizal: Yes we do, absolutely. I don't feel comfortable about people converting just for the marriage. It is a constant thing and is very stupid. I am very conscious of that.

Additionally, within the transcript of his *nikaah* ceremonies at the Noor Cultural Centre that he provided for this research, he often discusses the issue of coerced conversion within Islamic intermarriages:

Now the question may arise as to whether this marriage between two individuals of different faiths is consistent with the teachings of the Islamic religion.

Without getting into all of the theological details, please allow me to share one specific verse in the Qur'an which speaks about God's promise to those who are not Muslims. In chapter 2, verse 62, God states: "Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in God and the Last Day and does good, they have their reward with their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve."

As such as an official Muslim marriage officer of the Province of Ontario, I feel very comfortable facilitating and sanctifying this marriage.

I do not subscribe to the exercise of convenient faith conversion just for the sake of marriage in many cases just for one day in order to please family members and the community.

This is quite unfair to the individual who is being reluctantly converted because he or she loves someone and wants to marry him or her. It is also unfair to the family of the person being converted.

Islam does not condone this approach. Conversion is an extremely serious undertaking. It has to be genuine, sincere, highly knowledge-based and completed with due diligence.

After all, I stand before you as a Muslim because I was born a Muslim. Most of us did not have a choice of religion when we were born.

Conversion should not be something that is forced upon an individual in order to allow them to marry the individual that they are in love with because as Faizal Kayum says, religion was not a choice that individuals are given when they are born.

3. *Al-Mumtahinah* 60:10

The following verse is more historically specific than the previous two that were discussed:

Oh you who have believed, when the believing women come to you as emigrants examine them. Allah is most knowing as to their faith. And if you know them to be believers, then do not return them to the disbelievers; they are not lawful [wives] for them, nor are they lawful [husbands] for them. But give the disbelievers what they have spent. And there is no blame upon you if you marry them when you have given them their due compensation. And hold not to marriage bonds with disbelieving women, but ask for what you have spent and let them ask for what they have spent. That is the judgment of Allah; He judges between you. And Allah is Knowing and Wise.⁵⁵

This verse does not refer to the possibility of giving Muslim women in marriage to *Ahl al-kitab* men, but the possibility that such a union is firmly and unanimously rejected in the books of law and tradition within Islam.⁵⁶ In order to fully understand its significance, the entire *surah* should be considered. The name of the entire *surah* itself, *Al-*

⁵⁵ *Al-Mumtahinah*, 60:10.

⁵⁶ Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 161.

Mumtahinah, can be translated as “she that is to be examined” and it is believed that this verse should be understood in relation to verse 10. The name *Al-Mumtahinah* was given to this particular *surah* because women who emigrated to *dar al-Islam* (the Islamic state, which at this point in time was Medina) during this period of revelation were fleeing from the *Quraysh* tribe because of their marriages to their pagan husbands, whom they had left behind in Mecca, had become problematic. There were many Muslim men in Medina at the time as well whose wives were pagans and who had also been left behind in Mecca. The question arose whether or not the marital agreement between the Muslim individual and the non-Muslim individual continued to be valid. The reason this verse is relevant to the discussion of Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men forming relationships in a contemporary context is because it looks at the issue of conversion. This verse attempts to determine the status of a marriage between two non-Muslim individuals, where one individual later converts to Islam but the other does not. Both Yusuf Ali and Sayyid Qutb discuss the issue in their respective *tafsirs*.

Yusuf Ali’s interpretation of this verse emphasizes the importance of *iman* during this period. With regards to Muslim women married to non-Muslim men, Ali states the following:

Muslim women married to Pagan husbands in Makkah [Mecca] were oppressed for their Faith, and some of them came to Madinah [Medina] as refugees. After this, they were not to be returned to the custody of their Pagan husbands at Makkah, as the marriage of believing women with non-Muslims was held to be dissolved if the husbands did not accept Islam. But in order to give no suspicion to the Pagans that they were badly treated as they lost the dower they had given on marriage, that dower was to be repaid to the husbands. Thus helpless women refugees were to be protected at the cost of the Muslims.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Yusuf Abdullah Ali, *The Meaning of The Holy Qur’an*, 399.

Ali's exegetical translation of verse 60:10 implies that *iman* was the main factor that was to be considered when making the decision as to whether marriages between Muslim women and non-Muslim men were legitimate or not. He states that Muslim women, under such circumstances, fled to Medina as refugees since their *iman* was being oppressed. Such marriages were no longer seen as legitimate unless the non-Muslim husband converted to Islam and proved to have equivalent *iman* as his Muslim wife. If the conversion did not take place and the marriage dissipated, the dowry that was originally given on the wedding day had to be repaid to the husband. Ali also emphasizes that these refugees were to be protected by the *ummah* as a whole. According to Ali, the same reasoning applied to Muslim men who were married to non-Muslim women:

Unbelieving women in a Muslim society would only be a clog and a handicap. There would be neither happiness for them, nor could they conduce in any way to the healthy life of the society in which they lived as aliens. They were to be sent away, as their marriage was held to be dissolved; and the dowers paid to them were to be demanded from the guardians to whom they were sent back, just as in the contrary case the dowers of believing women were to be paid back to their Pagan ex-husbands.⁵⁸

Ali believes the Qur'an views non-Muslim women as detrimental and counterproductive to the *ummah* as a whole because of their lack of *iman*. He mentions that Muslim society itself would be disadvantageous and counterproductive for them as well. With regards to dowry, it was to be demanded back from their guardians and family, which is similar to the situation regarding marital unions between Muslim women and non-Muslim men. Another issue that was prevalent during this historical period was the question of how one was to know whether an individual was truly Muslim. Ali brings this issue up as he discusses the issue of non-Muslim women pretending to be Muslim and marrying Muslim men in Medina:

⁵⁸ Yusuf Abdullah Ali, *The Meaning of The Holy Qur'an*, 399.

The condition was that they should be Muslim women [with regards to the question of ‘who Muslim men could marry’]. How were the Muslims to know? A non-Muslim woman, in order to escape from her lawful guardians in Makkah, might pretend that she was a Muslim. The true state of her mind and heart would be known to Allah alone. But if the Muslims, on an examination of the woman, found that she professed Islam, she was to have protection.⁵⁹

Here we see how individuals could have taken advantage of the protection that was being offered to the refugees fleeing from Mecca. It is important to keep in mind that the only entity that could fully know the intentions and *iman* of an individual (according to this verse and Ali’s *tafsir*) was God. Thus, Ali’s interpretation of the following verse is centered on the issue regarding the degree of *iman* within an individual.

Similar to Yusuf Ali, the central focus of Qutb’s interpretation is on the concept of *iman* as well. Qutb’s emphasizes the importance of spirituality and *iman* within a marriage:

When the most important bond of faith has been severed, nothing can repair the relationship. Marriage is a union of permanent settlement and it cannot be replaced by any other. A believer’s heart cannot warm to another that is devoid of faith. There can be no true feeling of mutual inclination or security between two hearts when only one of them has faith. Marriage survives on mutual affection, compassion, inclination, and security.⁶⁰

Qutb makes the statement that a believing individual with a lot of *iman* cannot spiritually align with an individual who is an unbeliever. Qutb believes this particular verse indicates that mutual spirituality must exist within a union for it to survive and thrive. He supports the ruling laid out in the verse that there should be separation of married couples when one of the parties of the union has given their allegiance to Islam:

We see how these rulings concerning the separation of married couples provide an example of the practical implementation of the Islamic concept of life values and ties. They reflect the unity of the Muslim community and it being distinct from any other. It is a community where all life is based on faith, where all distinctions

⁵⁹ Yusuf Abdullah Ali, *The Meaning of The Holy Qur’an*, 399.

⁶⁰ Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur’an* vol. 16, (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1999), 472.

of race, colour, language, family, and land are insignificant. There is only one sign that distinguishes between the people – the sign of the party to which they belong. There are only two parties: the party of God and the party of Satan.⁶¹

Ali believes that by implementing these separations, the “Islamic concept of life values and ties” are being emphasized and acknowledged. He places significance on the most important factor within a community (*ummah*), which is faith (*iman*). He also makes the point that other distinctions amongst individuals (such as race, colour, language, family, and land) are insignificant in comparison to differences within *iman*. His final statement argues that there are only two types of individuals, those who believe in God (referring to believers and those who are part of the *ummah*) and those who believe in Satan (referring to unbelievers and those who are outside of the *ummah*). Analogous to Ali’s emphasis on the importance of attempting to rule out fake believers, Qutb makes a similar point about testing an individual’s *iman*:

The first step required by these rules was to test migrating women in order to determine their reasons for migration. In other words, they must not be trying to escape from a marriage that had gone wrong, or be pursuing some other material benefit, or hoping to marry men they were in love with in the Muslim community...the test was a form of questioning so as to establish whether the woman was migrating only because she loved God and His Messenger or for some other purpose. The test was also to establish whether or not she was in love with a man from the Muslim community, and whether or not she was fleeing from her husband.⁶²

It is important to realize an individual’s intentions for migration to a Muslim community at the time and whether those intentions were pure or impure. Therefore, Qutb’s *tafsir* regarding this particular verse also looks primarily at the importance of *iman* and mutual spirituality within marriages/unions.

⁶¹ Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur’an* vol. 16, 473.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 471.

Of the three verses discussed here regarding interfaith marriages within Islam, *Al-Mumtahinah* 60:10 is the only one that specifically addresses both genders. *Al-Mumtahinah* 60:10 emphasizes (for both men and women) that any marriage between any Muslim individual to a non-Muslim individual had to be adjourned during this period. Although both Yusuf Ali and Sayyid Qutb present valid points about the implications of *Al-Mumtahinah* 60:10, there are some critiques that need to be attended to when considered from a feminist lens.

First, in both Yusuf Ali and Sayyid Qutb's translation of *Al-Mumtahinah* 60:10 subjective, ambiguous terms are used to describe the non-Muslim individuals. The terms "pagan" and "unbeliever" (used by Ali and Qutb, respectfully) could exclude *Ahl al-kitab*. Several scholars have argued that this verse refers primarily to non-Muslims classified as *Mushrikeen*, thus implying that there is no direct rule within the Qur'an prohibiting marriages amongst Muslims and *Ahl al-kitab* individuals. Hence, this verse is very subjective and ambiguous with regards to its specificity of the type of non-Muslims to which it refers.

Second, the point made by Yusuf Ali stating that only God is capable of judging an individual's *iman* indicates that it is not be appropriate for others to deduce whether an individual is faithful to God, which can be related to the *tawhidic* principle discussed earlier within this chapter. If this is the case, it is inappropriate for scholars to argue that Muslim women are not permitted to marry *Ahl al-Kitab* men because the women are compromising their faith since only God can know and be the judge. The relationship that one has with God is only between that particular individual and God and no one else has the right to judge or stigmatize them for their actions.

Finally, the point made by Sayyid Qutb that a Muslim's heart cannot warm to another that is non-Muslim is contradictory because before these women migrated to Medina, some of them were happily married to their non-Muslim husbands. Several of the Muslim men married to non-Muslim women in Medina prior to the establishment of *dar al-Islam* were also happily married and peacefully living their lives. The creation of these religious, geographical boundaries and restrictions led to these marriages falling apart. Thus, love and marriage between individuals of any religion was plausible before the establishment of the Islamic state, which makes Qutb's statement that a Muslim cannot fully love a non-Muslim invalid.

Ahadith

Ahadith are a major source of guidance for Muslims and are composed of brief narrative accounts of the words and deeds of the Prophet and other spiritual authorities.⁶³ These narrative accounts arose as a result of oral traditions that can be traced back to the original witness. There was a strong necessity to verify the origin and authenticity of *ahadith* and this led to extremely detailed biographies of the individuals who were named in the chain of transmitters.⁶⁴ This verification was done to evaluate their piety and reliability and to ensure the reliability of the *hadith*. Essentially, these were traditions that were expressed through word-of-mouth, making them questionable, as they were open to misinterpretation in their transmission. The possibility that these traditions may have been wrongfully conveyed makes their reliability dubious and doubtful. There are two particular *ahadith* that are relevant to this paper, including one that discusses status problems pertaining to interfaith marriages and hierarchical relationships and another one

⁶³ Paula Y. Skreslet, "Basic Primary Sources in Islamic Religion," 51.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

regarding the traditions concerning the marriage of the Prophet's daughter Zaynab to the polytheist Abu al-As.

1. *Kafa'a*: Status Problems and Hierarchical Relationships

According to Friedmann, marriage within Islam can be viewed as a form of enslavement since the husband is considered to be of higher status than and have dominance over the wife, who is considered to be of lower status and subservient.⁶⁵ Friedmann also mentions that marriage between a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man would result in an unacceptable clash of the status of the individuals since the woman should enjoy her status of being a Muslim and not have to be in a subservient role to her non-Muslim husband.⁶⁶ Such a marriage would be problematic because of the inferred power dynamics between the two genders because a man is seen as appropriately having power over a woman.

Additionally, there is a power dynamic with regard to religious status, since a Muslim is seen to have more power than a non-Muslim according to a *hadith* by Umar bin al-Khattab, the second caliph: “An emigrant may marry a Bedouin woman, but a Bedouin man may not marry an emigrant woman so as to make her leave the place to which she migrated.”⁶⁷ The term “emigrant” mentioned in this tradition refers to an individual who migrates to Mecca and is higher in status than a Bedouin, and therefore is permitted to marry a Bedouin woman.⁶⁸ An individual classified as a Bedouin is traditionally known to be a part of a rural Arabian ethnic group that is traditionally divided into tribes or clans. The issue of the prohibition of Muslim women marrying non-

⁶⁵ Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam*, 162.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Muslim men can be directly related to the issue of power and caste. Women are not allowed to marry men that are lower in status than themselves and this principle is applicable not only with respect to religion and gender, but also to socioeconomic standing (as seen in this particular tradition). According to Friedmann, if it is not permissible for a non-Muslim to own a Muslim slave, it is not permissible for him to have a Muslim wife either.⁶⁹

The justification of the prohibition of exogamy among Muslim women can be related to debates regarding gender and religious hierarchical relationships. Friedmann argues that the rule according to which Muslims may take non-Muslims in matrimony (but a Muslim woman cannot be married outside her faith) is intimately related to the idea the Islam is ranked above other religions and that men are seen as the superior and dominant part of the household.⁷⁰ The assertion according to which “Islam is exalted and nothing is exalted above it” expresses the principle according to which Muslim men are allowed to marry non-Muslim women, but non-Muslim men are not accorded the privilege of having a Muslim wife.⁷¹ The most striking expression regarding this idea can be found on the authority of Abdullah bin Abbas: “God sent Muhammad with the truth to make it prevail over all religion(s). Our religion is the best of religions and our faith stands above (all other) faiths. Our men are above their women, but their men not to be above our women.”⁷² The descending hierarchy of non-Islamic religions consists of Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and polytheism, which demonstrates how *Ahl al-*

⁶⁹ Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam*, 162.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁷² *Ibid.*

Kitab are placed higher in an Islamic perspective in comparison to other non-Islamic individuals.⁷³

This status system was relevant in previous socio-historical contexts, but today it loses its meaning. Historically, men were of higher ranking and dominant over women, but within a contemporary framework this is no longer the case. As a result of changes in sexual politics (especially in Western societies), women have equal status to men. Arguments relying on gender and religion as influences of hierarchical relationships, are essentially invalid because of the current timeframe in which they are being considered. Finally, prohibiting Muslim women from marrying non-Muslim men can also be argued against using the *tawhidic* paradigm, since all humans are seen as equal and the only entity above them is God.

2. The Marriage of the Prophet's Daughter to a Polytheist

The traditions pertaining to the marriage of the Prophet's eldest daughter, Zaynab, to the polytheist. Abu al-As, are particularly significant within a discussion of intermarriage in Islam. There are two prominent explanations that are given regarding this event. They include excruciating explanations by which the *ulama* try to resolve the seeming contradictions between their laws and the traditions describing an event from the first decade of Islam in which the Prophet was personally involved.⁷⁴ These traditions provide valuable insights into the problems that were created in Mecca by the emergence of the new religion of Islam. Zaynab converted to her father's religion right away, which meant that Abu al-As was then a polytheist married to a Muslim woman. His tribe tried to convince him to divorce Zaynab since he was now married to the daughter of the man

⁷³ Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam*, 174.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 193.

who became their enemy.⁷⁵ Abu al-As continued his marriage with Zaynab and treated his father-in-law with friendliness, but at the same time he refused to join the religion for several years.⁷⁶ This particular tradition is filled with religious difficulties, but it is these difficulties that endow the story with a unique ring of authenticity and trustworthiness.

Zaynab essentially was married to a non-Muslim man for several years and the Prophet did not contest the marriage of his daughter to a non-Muslim man, one who can be considered to be from the category of *mushrikeen* when the historical context is taken into account. Although Abu al-As was polytheistic not an *Ahl al-kitab*, they were able to keep their marriage going for several years despite their religious differences. This story can be related to verse 60:10 since it shows a direct narrative that depicts the issues that were discussed in *Al-Mumtahinah*. This story also contradicts what was discussed regarding spiritual intimacy since these two individuals were able to maintain a successful marriage for several years despite their religious differences.

Once again, both of these *ahadith* are subject to critiques (particularly feminist ones) with regards to their subjectivity, patriarchal tones, and socio-historical contexts when discussing interfaith marriages between Muslim women and non-Muslim men. Both the Qur'an and *ahadith* do not take into account the timeframe and circumstances of when these verses and narratives were developed. As a result of notions of modernity, the traditional interpretation of such verses and narratives should be critically analyzed and evaluated in order to determine whether they are applicable to situations in the present that were not common in the past. An example of this would be Muslim minorities living and migrating to the West and engaging in a more multi-faith and pluralistic

⁷⁵ Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam*, 193.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

environment. Also, both the Qur'an and *ahadith* do not specifically prohibit interfaith marriages between Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men. One possible reason for this might be a result of the patriarchal tone and androcentric focus of the verses and narratives. Since intermarriage is a subjective issue within a grey area of Islamic thought, it might be wise for women to exercise *ijtihad* when making decisions regarding whom they decide to marry. The rulings regarding the issue range across a spectrum where scholars completely prohibit such a union to scholars being more lenient and allowing women to use their own judgment with regards to engaging in such a union.

Religious Rulings and Authorities

Fiqh al-Aqalliyat

A relatively recent Islamic jurisprudence, *fiqh al-aqalliyat* is known as the *fiqh* or jurisprudence of Muslim minorities, is a legal doctrine that was introduced in the 1990s by two prominent religious figures, Shaykh Dr. Taha Jabir al-Alwani of Virginia and Shaykh Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi of Qatar.⁷⁷ There are four legal tools and sources that are used by Islamic scholars and authorities who make rulings according to *fiqh al-aqalliyat*: *ijtihad*, *maslaha*, *taysir*, and *urf*. *Fiqh al-aqalliyat* essentially asserts that Muslim minorities, especially those residing in the West, deserve a special new legal discipline to address their unique needs, which differ from the ones pertaining to Muslims living in Islamic countries.⁷⁸ Although Muslim minorities have lived under non-Islamic rule throughout Islamic history, the recent migration of Muslims to Western lands over the last century (particularly the second half of the 20th century) has created an

⁷⁷ Shammai Fishman, "*Fiqh al-Aqalliyat*: A Legal Theory for Muslim Minorities," 1.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

exceptional situation where large Muslim communities now live under non-Islamic Western rule and culture.⁷⁹ *Fiqh al-aqalliyat* deals with the daily problems that arise for the millions of Muslims residing in the West by trying to resolve conflicts with the culture and values of host societies from within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence.

Fiqh al-aqalliyat is relevant to the issue regarding the prohibition of marriages involving Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men because it emphasizes how increased migration of Muslims to the West is forcing Islamic scholars to consider issues from a different perspective. The issue of exogamy among Muslim women can be one that is considered through *fiqh al-aqalliyat* since the issue of intermarriage was not as prominent prior to the increased migration of Muslims to the West. It is important to note that not all Islamic religious authorities agree with *fiqh al-aqalliyat* and those who accept it may not be part of the majority Islamic community. For the purpose of this research, I will utilize the four legal tools of *fiqh al-aqalliyat* to demonstrate how the tools can be applicable to the issue of Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men in Western societies.

1. *Ijtihad*

Ijtihad is an Islamic legal concept that refers to an acceptable independence of thought vis-à-vis religious rulings and to the right of a learned scholar to make rulings, not only on the basis of precedents, but also on his/her own understanding of the texts.⁸⁰ It emphasizes the exercising of independent reasoning or thinking in the derivation of a religious ruling. *Ijtihad* is relevant when examining the issue of interfaith marriages amongst Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men since the subjective nature of the verses

⁷⁹ Shammai Fishman, “*Fiqh al-Aqalliyat: A Legal Theory for Muslim Minorities*,” 1.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

and narratives discussing the issue within the Qur'an and *ahadith* make it permissible for an individual to exercise *ijtihad*. As seen with the *tafsir* analysis in this chapter, nowhere in the Qur'an does it specifically and directly prohibit such marriages. It would, therefore, be permissible for individuals to make an appropriate ruling regarding the issue based on situational factors (e.g. Muslims living as minorities in non-Muslim, Western societies) alongside with their understanding of the verses within the Qur'an pertaining to this issue.

For example, participant 6 discussed her understanding of intermarriage within Islam:

There isn't anything written about them [women] or what they can do and there is oversight. This goes back to how much you can believe, do I believe that we are less able? I think women are very able if they wanted to perpetuate religion. Like they could be in a marriage, this day and age, and they can be like, "Well, I want my child to be Muslim." So if the issue was that they were not going to continue and actually perpetuate religion that might not be a valid concern anymore.

This participant identified as a spiritual Muslim married to a Hindu male, her justification for her marriage demonstrates a utilization of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*).

Interestingly, this was also the case among some Muslim men who married non-Muslim women who were not *ahl al-kitab*. Participant 4, a Pakistani-Muslim male married to a Hindu female, discussed his frustrations about generational differences regarding using independent reasoning and how he exercised his *ijtihad* when his family and those around him questioned his decision to marry a Hindu woman:

I think that's the problem too because my parents never read the Qur'an in a language in which they understood, they only read it in Arabic. So they could never really explain anything. All of the explanations that they do were in third person like "Oh our Islamic teacher told us this..." or "Our mom told us this..." or "My aunt told me this..." It was never that they read it by themselves, it's a very different thing. It's as if I sat here and told you about Pulp Fiction versus you actually watching Pulp Fiction or if I told you about Lord of the Rings versus you actually watching it or reading the books, they are going to be three very different

experiences. And that's how I've felt for Pakistani people, religion...and there's other political reasons why it's only taught in Arabic...if you don't really know what's in there, how are you going to question it? That's how my parents were raised and they only knew from what their parents told them, their teachers told them, and that's what they taught us. "This is what the Qur'an says, we can't really question it because we only read it in Arabic."

It can be argued that postmodern Muslims in comparison to their traditional parents can see that *ijtihad* is a more practical approach to making decisions since they are living in a different time and place. Also, independent reasoning is utilizable by women in modern societies (particularly Western societies) because of the increase in their education and independence.

2. *Maslaha*

The concept of *maslaha* refers to public interest and the principle of general welfare. *Maslaha* asserts that based on the needs of the *ummah*, a new ruling could be enacted and implemented to solve a contemporary problem even though the ruling is absent in the earlier textual sources. *Maslaha* is also applicable to discussions concerning interfaith marriages amongst Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men since it is of public interest and concern. According to Riley, most Muslim leaders say that the issue of interfaith marriage is a significant one within their communities.⁸¹ Muslims within the West are raising awareness of the issue of interfaith marriages as well due to the increase of the demographic. Riley writes regarding American Muslim rates on interfaith marriage:

The interfaith marriage rate among Muslims is roughly the same as for other Americans. According to data taken from the Pew Religious Landscape Survey of 2007, in round numbers, about one in five American-Muslims have married outside their religion. This is a particularly high percentage considering that 63% of Muslims are actually foreign-born. Even among the foreign-born, though, 12 percent are intermarried. Given that they were probably unlikely to marry outside

⁸¹ Naomi S. Riley, *'Til Faith Do Us Part*, 154.

the faith in their home countries – Muslim countries mostly take a dim view of such intermixing – this is a remarkable record of intermarriage.⁸²

The rising rates of interfaith marriages amongst Muslims within America are of significant public interest and necessitate legal leniency as a result. The legal tool of *maslaha* can be used to reconsider the issue of exogamy of Muslim women.

Furthermore, new resources for interfaith marriages and families are emerging within Western societies, an indicator of the demand for this growing community. One example mentioned previously would include the mixed marriage ceremonies performed by community religious authorities. Authors of contemporary literature on interfaith marriages and families are also interacting with individuals from this demographic and establishing resources that can help assist the interfaith population with common issues they may experience. Susan Katz Miller, an interfaith child and interfaith parent, is the author of *Being Both: Embracing Two Religions in One Interfaith Family*⁸³ and she provides personal interfaith family coaching and facilitates workshops and seminars for interfaith couples, teens, grandparents, clergy, and educators. Within her book, she provides a comprehensive list of resources for interfaith individuals and those in interfaith marriages that span from North America to Europe. Participant 14a, a cultural Jew married to a Muslim, also utilized her experiences in an interfaith marriage to assist others within the same demographic. She was a licensed clinical social worker in New York and decided to specialize in issues of identity and supporting mixed couples. The emergence of new resources for interfaith individuals and those in interfaith marriages implicates that the issue of interfaith marriage in Islam is a community concern, which

⁸² Naomi S. Riley, *'Til Faith Do Us Part*, 150.

⁸³ Susan Katz Miller, *Being Both: Embracing Two Religions in One Interfaith Family*, (Boston: Beacon Press Books, 2013).

makes it justifiable to utilize the legal tool of *maslaha* to re-evaluate the subjectivity behind the prohibition of exogamy among Muslim women.

3. *Taysir*

Taysir is a concept that emphasizes how Islamic jurisprudence can be made more comprehensible to Muslims living in the West.⁸⁴ *Taysir* was discussed extensively by Al-Qaradawi in his work *Taysir al-Fiqh li-Muslim al-Mu'asir fi Daw' al-Qur'an wal-Sunna* (*Making Fiqh Easy for Contemporary Muslims in the Light of the Qur'an and Sunnah*).⁸⁵ According to Al-Qaradawi, when confronted with a choice between strictness and leniency, the latter should be supported. Al-Qaradawi particularly supports leniency for members of Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim lands because he views this group of Muslims as being in a condition of weakness in comparison to Muslims living in Muslim countries.⁸⁶ What Al-Qaradawi is implying is that Muslim minorities in the West have a disadvantage because of the Western influences that surround them, which may not always coincide with lifestyles dictated in Islamic religious literature.

This approach can be helpful for interfaith Muslim marriages in the West because Muslims are exposed to a more pluralistic environment and interact with individuals that are from a diverse range of cultures and religions that may differ from their own backgrounds. In some cases, Muslims in the West may be living in a community where they are one of the only Muslims in the area. With regard to the gender bias concerning intermarriage in Islam, interfaith marriages between Muslim men and *Ahl al-kitab* women are more frequent which has contributed to a gender imbalance: “The number of

⁸⁴ Tauseef Ahmad Parray, “The Legal Methodology of “*Fiqh al-Aqalliyat*” and its Critics: An Analytical Study,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 32, no. 1 (2012), 98.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 99.

men marrying out has actually created a severe gender imbalance, leaving many Muslim women without partners. In other words, the religiously sanctioned intermarriages are forcing more religiously forbidden intermarriages.”⁸⁷ A particular example of this can be seen within Muslim matchmaking events in England, where the ratio of Muslim men to Muslim women is 1:5.⁸⁸ Another contributing factor for this gender imbalance within the Muslim dating pool is the desire of some Muslim men to pursue marriages with younger, less career-advanced, non-westernized Muslim women. Qanta Ahmed (an American-Muslim physician) mentioned this observation within her op-ed in *USA Today*:

Muslim women living in non-Muslim majority nations frequently lack intellectually and professionally equal Muslim partners. Instead we [Muslim women] are eschewed by our male Muslim counterparts for younger, less career-advanced Muslim women, often from countries of parental heritage. These forces drive Muslim women to either select suitable marriage partners from outside the faith or face unremitting spinsterhood.⁸⁹

Ahmed’s argument goes back to the concept of *taysir* since Muslim women are put at a disadvantage as they are unable to always find Muslim partners due the gender imbalance within the Muslim dating pool. Since there is no explicit verse within the Qur’an that prohibits Muslim women from marrying *Ahl al-kitab* men, the reasonable solution for this issue would be to allow leniency for exogamy of Muslim women in the West.

Interpreting the issue of intermarriage in Islam using *taysir* demonstrates how Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim lands can be given leniency to make decisions as a result of the environment and lifestyle that they are surrounded by. Clearly, there is a necessity for exercising *ijtihad* when making decisions. Thus, the legal tool of *taysir*

⁸⁷ Naomi S. Riley, *‘Til Faith Do Us Part*, 158.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Qanta Ahmed, “Islam, Interfaith Marriage Go Hand in Hand,” *USA Today*, February 12, 2012.

should be considered when discussing reason for the permissibility of intermarriage among Muslim women.

4. *Urf*

The concept of *urf* refers to custom and changes in rulings according to time and place. It is important to realize that with time progression comes change, implying that living in the past and romanticizing history can be detrimental to progress and compatibility within modernity. This insight is demonstrated in verse 13:11 from the Qur'an: "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."⁹⁰ This verse suggests that until Muslims change themselves, further change cannot be brought forth to them. Muslims cannot move forward nor allow Islam to progress if they do not adapt to modernity. Recognizing the role of change is relevant to the issue of interfaith marriages between Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men since this is a fairly new issue that has arisen as a result of migratory patterns of Muslims to Western societies.

Through the use of all four legal tools and sources used by *fiqh al-aqalliyat*, the issue of the prohibition of marriages between Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men can be critically analyzed through the use of the four legal tools of *ijtihad*, *maslaha*, *taysir*, and *urf*. It is highly probable that the issue of Muslim women marrying *Ahl al-kitab* men will be debated and looked at further through *fiqh al-aqalliyat* in the future.

Fatawa

I will be considering reformist positions regarding intermarriage in Islam as the analysis within this paper is predominantly contemporary. The Islamic scholars considered within this section exhibit *ijma*, which demonstrates exercises of judgment

⁹⁰ *Al-Ra'd*, 13:11.

and independent reason based on the consensus of the Muslim *ummah*.⁹¹ In classical Islamic theory, *ijma* is the agreement of qualified legal scholars in a given generation and such consensus of opinion is deemed infallible.⁹² The act of *ijma* involves the exercise of *ijtihad* by the individual scholars arriving at their initial conclusions.⁹³

1. Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl

Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl is a professor of law at the University of California, Los Angeles. He recently issued a *fatwa* regarding Christian men marrying Muslim women after an individual, who witnessed a Muslim woman being scrutinized by other individuals for having a Christian husband, asked him for an educated explanation regarding the issue:

In all honesty, personally, I am not convinced that the evidence prohibiting Muslim women from marrying a *kitabī* is very strong. Muslim jurists took a very strong position on this matter – many of them going as far as saying if a Muslim woman marries a *kitabī* she is as good as an apostate. I think, and God knows best, that this position is not reasonable and the evidence supporting it is not very strong. However I must confess that in my humble opinion, I strongly sympathize with the jurists that argued that in non-Muslim countries it is reprehensible (*makruh*) for a Muslim to marry a non-Muslim. God knows best – I have reached this position after observing that the children of these Muslim/non-Muslim marriages in most cases do not grow up with a strong sense of their Islamic identity. It seems to me that in countries like the U.S. it is best for the children if they grow up with a Muslim father and mother. I am not comfortable telling a Muslim woman marrying a *kitabī* that she is committing a grave sin and that she must terminate her marriage immediately. I do tell such a woman that she should know that by being married to a *kitabī* that she is acting against the weight of the consensus; I tell her what the evidence is; and then I tell her my own *ijtihad* on the matter (that it is *makruh* for both men and women in non-Muslim countries). After telling her all of this, I add that she must always remember that only God knows best; that she should reflect on the matter as hard as she can; then she

⁹¹ Alex B. Leeman, “Interfaith Marriage in Islam,” 751.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 753.

should pray and plead for guidance from God; and then ultimately she must do what her conscience dictates.⁹⁴

Dr. Abou El Fadl emphasizes how the justification for the prohibition of Muslim women marrying *Ahl al-kitab* is weak, which is true and evident from the analysis of the primary sources discussed in this chapter. Dr. Abou El Fadl goes on to say that he does somewhat agree with other scholars prohibiting such a union because of the concern that the children who are brought into the world as a result of such marriages do not grow up with a strong sense of Islamic identity (which is arguable in light of the data collected for this research). He acknowledges the importance of *ijtihad* and rules that the woman should use her own personal human reasoning and do “what their conscience dictates.” In the end, the matter of whether a Muslim woman should marry a non-Muslim is hers alone to make through her personal *ijtihad* and conscience, a position agreed with by many of the Muslim female participants within this research.

2. Dr. Khaleel Mohammed

Dr. Khaleel Mohammed is an assistant professor of religion at the Center for Islamic and Arabic Studies and the MS Homeland Security Program at San Diego State University. Dr. Mohammed claims that the traditional interpretation of the Qur’an prohibiting interfaith marriages for women is grounded on the historical notion that a woman must accept the religion of her husband, which was applicable in a different time and a different place:

The verse that is traditionally used by imams to prohibit an inter-religious marriage is Qur’an 5:5. Traditional imams contend that since women are mentioned, and men are not, then it must be understood that the marriage of Muslim women with non-Muslim men is forbidden.

⁹⁴ Khaled Abou El Fadl, “Fatwa by Dr. Abou El Fadl: On Christian Men Marrying Muslim Women,” *Scholar of the House*, last modified May 2016, <https://www.searchforbeauty.org/2016/05/01/on-christian-men-marrying-muslim-women-updated/>.

This, however, is problematic. For the Qur'an is addressed, because of the custom of the time, to men. It is for this reason that the Qur'an says for example, "And when you divorce your wives..." or "During the nights of fasting [Ramadan] you may have sex with your wives..." What do I mean by the custom of time? In the tribal context, the woman, once married, accepted the husband as master. He, in turn, accepted the religion of his tribal.⁹⁵

Dr. Mohammed's interpretation is centered on changes regarding social conditions of women today by acknowledging "that women are equals of men, that women have legal rights, and that those rights include placing conditions on the marriage."⁹⁶ Additionally, we can see that there are undertones of the legal tool of *waf* being utilized as Dr. Mohammed argues that the prohibition was implemented and based around customs within a different time and place. Dr. Mohammed gives the blessing for Muslim woman to marry outside the faith "on the condition that neither spouse will be forcibly converted to the other's religion."⁹⁷ This parallels the same viewpoint given by Faizal Kayum, the Muslim wedding officiant interviewed for this study regarding conversion of spouses within a Muslim intermarriage.

3. Dr. Hassan al-Turabi

Dr. Hassan al-Turabi, a religious and Islamist leader in Sudan, recently issued a *fatwa* authorizing marriages between Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men within his lecture entitled "The Role of Women in Just Governance."⁹⁸ John Akec writes:

Al-Turabi described the teachings that a Muslim woman should not marry a Christian or Jew as misguided teachings intended to confuse and keep women behind. He explained that the practice has its origins in war times which were used against those fighting with Muslims, but which ceased once hostilities were over.

⁹⁵ Khaleel Mohammed, "Imam Khaleel Mohammed's Defense of Inter-Faith Marriage."

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ John Akec, "Sudan's Turabi – Muslim Women Can Marry Christian or Jew," *Sudan Tribune*, last modified April 2006, http://www.sudantribune.com/article.php3?id_article=15021.

Once again, we see another contemporary Islamic authority utilizing *urf* within their ruling regarding exogamy of Muslim women.

All three of these Islamic authorities utilize the legal tools of *fiqh al-aqalliyat*, which proves that the issue concerning Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men (particularly *Ahl al-kitab* men) can be reevaluated and reformed using contemporary legal tools.

Conclusion

As the above evidence suggests, prohibitions on marriages between Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men should be reexamined and reconsidered. The subjective nature of the religious texts and literature used to justify this position are not sufficient since they are indirect and not relevant to contemporary socio-historic contexts. The ambiguity of Islamic literature discussing intermarriage allows for progressive interpretations to be made by postmodern Muslims. Emergence of new *fiqh* and *fatawa* indicate that this is an issue that will most likely be reconsidered in the future and possibly reformed through more lenient and practical viewpoints when considering Muslims living as minorities in the West. To sum up, there are two sociological reasons for why traditionalist Islamic sources and interpretations prohibit interfaith marriage involving Muslim women and *Ahl al-kitab* men, both of which are questionable as demonstrated by data collection for this research.

First, there is the assertion that the faith of the Muslim woman would be jeopardized if she were to marry an *Ahl al-kitab* man. This may not be the case within Western societies since there is less cause for concern that women will compromise their

faith because the “head of the household” instruct them to do so. Women now have legal rights as well and those rights include placing conditions on their marriages, so an interfaith marriage can take place on their own conditions and terms.⁹⁹ Data collected for this research demonstrates this phenomenon.

Second, there an assertion that the children of such a marriage would not be raised as Muslims. As for the issue of the offspring of such a marriage not being raised Muslim, the idea of the Muslim man being the only one who is able to keep the faith within a family is a common theological misconception since the mother of the child has a significant influence over the child’s upbringing and faith from sociological and psychological sense. This is also justifiable by recent statistics done by studies of interfaith children of Muslim women who have married out. An Indonesian study by Noryamin Aini shows that considerably more children of interfaith marriages identify as Muslims if their mother was the Muslim partner (up to 79%) than if their father was Muslim (50%), which suggests a more influential role for mothers in initial faith formation and identification.¹⁰⁰ With regards to a contemporary context, both of these issues can be argued against using sociological data.

⁹⁹ Naomi S. Riley, *Til Faith Do Us Part*, 154.

¹⁰⁰ Noryamin Aini, “Inter-Religious Marriage from Socio-Historical Islamic Perspectives,” *BYU Law Review* 2008, 3 (2008).

III

Globalization: Postmodern and Contemporary Identities

Recently, Islam has become globalized as a result of Muslims moving from Muslim lands to non-Muslim ones. Globalized Islam refers to the way in which the relationship of Muslims to Islam has been reshaped by globalization, westernization, and the impact of living as a minority.¹⁰¹ As a result of these processes, a new generation of Muslims in the West has been created that has differing and more complex identities than previous generations of Muslim immigrants. Roy further explains that there recently has also been widespread confusion between the concepts of Islam as a religion and ‘Muslim culture.’¹⁰²

Muslims in the West are in contact with multiple races and religions and the chances of Muslims marrying individuals who may not be of the same race and religion has substantially increased. Islam has always encountered various religious communities, both in the area in which it emerged and in the vast territories that Muslim armies conquered during the period of its phenomenal expansion. Friedmann writes regarding pluralistic encounters during earlier Islamic history:

The most distinctive characteristic of these encounters was the fact that Muslims faced the other religions from the position of a ruling power, and enjoyed in relation to them a position of unmistakable superiority. They were therefore able to determine the nature of their relationship with the others in conformity with their world-view and in accordance with their beliefs.¹⁰³

Today, Muslims in the West encounter other religions from a minority position and are not in ruling power.

¹⁰¹ Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search For a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁰³ Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam*, 9.

Another relevant issue that Friedmann brings to attention is the emergence of new identities: “Questions of religious freedom are pertinent not only to non-Muslims who live in a Muslim state, but also to Muslims who deviate from beliefs considered orthodox by the religious establishment of their time and place.”¹⁰⁴ Muslims who stray from orthodox Islamic beliefs and practices can be seen to include those who are intermarrying, particularly within the West.

These new Islamic identities are also a result of generational differences between first-generation parents and their second-generation children. A common trend that was identified among Muslim participants within this research who married non-Muslims was that they identified with Islam only culturally not religiously. Postmodern definitions of “Muslim” are emerging as a result, definitions that are comparable to postmodern definitions of Jewishness. Regarding contemporary Jewish identity, Aviv and Shneer write:

As many Jews around the world are discovering, ‘the Jewish people’ means not that all Jews are one but, rather, that all Jews share one thing and one thing alone – they identify as Jews, whatever that may mean. It is a postmodern – some might even say an empty – definition of Jewish identity, which makes the definition of Jewishness completely subjective and slippery. But, in fact, the only thing that Jews have in common is the fact that they self-identify as Jews.¹⁰⁵

Drawing this comparison between the definition of modern Jews and modern Muslims is constructive, as postmodern definitions of Jewishness can be theoretically helpful for understanding the Muslim diaspora. Similarly, drawing upon insights into intermarriage for Jews is helpful when considering intermarriage in Islam particularly since the

¹⁰⁴ Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam*, 9.

¹⁰⁵ Caryn Aviv & David Shneer, *New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 175.

majority of books and opinion articles on the topic of interfaith marriage (with the exception of clinical articles) are published by Jewish organizations or Jewish journals.¹⁰⁶

An example of generational differences among Muslims can be seen within dating styles and mate selection, which is inherently tied into intermarriage. A recent dissertation¹⁰⁷ written by Shehnaz Haqqani discusses concerns about marriage among Muslims in minority contexts in the West. The study raised issues of generational changes and differences between parents' expectations for their child's potential marriage partner as opposed to their children's own preferences and expectations. The study highlighted and explored three main themes that emerged within the data: (1) the tension between parental authority and individual choice, (2) the perceived unavailability of marriage partners, and (3) issues faced by educated and career-oriented Muslim women. All three of these themes were also predominantly represented within the interviews conducted for this research. The first theme of tensions between parental authority and individual choice will be discussed further below in this chapter.

Generational differences in accepting and contesting interfaith relationships and marriage are a result of anxieties about assimilation and the loss of religion and culture. This concern is evident in Jewish and Islamic communities as Jews and Muslims in the Western world are living in predominantly culturally Christian majority, secular settings. While many prefer endogamy when it comes to Jewish and Muslim marriages, anxieties about exogamy may not be entirely justified or valid. Theoretically considering Jewish

¹⁰⁶ Marianne Husby Callahan, "Interfaith Family Process and The Negotiation of Identity and Difference" (PhD Diss., University of Southern California, 2001), 10.

¹⁰⁷ Shehnaz Haqqani, "Gendered Expectations, Personal Choice, and Social Compatibility in Western Muslim Marriages" (Master's Thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 2013).

intermarriages as an example can help paint a picture for understanding Muslim intermarriages:

In reality, very few offspring of Jewish-gentile intermarriage grow up without any Jewish identity at all. It is rare for a child of intermarriage, even someone living a Christian life, not to identify as a Jew to some extent. The vast majority of children of mixed couples grow up with either an exclusively Jewish identity or a partial Jewish-gentile identity.

There is another reason why a high rate of intermarriage does not represent a one-way road to assimilation. In a society where Jews and gentiles intermarry on a regular basis, it is likely that some of the non-Jewish or partial Jewish offspring of intermarriage will grow up to marry Jews and subsequently raise their children exclusively as Jews. During periods of intermarriage, Jewish identity weaves in as well as out.¹⁰⁸

Several of the participants in this research, even those who identified as culturally Muslim, still found it important for their children and for themselves to maintain a Muslim identity to some extent and they were proactive about ensuring that it was preserved within their interfaith families.

Fears of assimilation and possible loss of religious and cultural identities have emerged from the process of globalization itself. As more Muslims immigrate to the West and form new identities and also have children with multiple identities, they are opening doors for practicing Islam and expressing their cultural backgrounds in new ways. This chapter will consider the influences of globalization on Islam through the case study of intermarriage in Islam in the West. This will be done by analyzing second-generation Muslim individuals juggling multiple identities (including religious and socio-cultural Muslim identities) and effects of intermarriage through a discussion of postmodern definitions of “Muslimness.” Generational differences amongst dating and mate selection

¹⁰⁸ Rabbi Arthur Blecher, *The New American Judaism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 173.

and the role of immediate and extended family upon intermarriage will also be taken into account.

Identity Management: Discussions of Faith Development

Identity is a social construct located within some form of social structure, either situational or transient. Identity is established when others place an individual as a social subject by assigning them the same identity that they assume for themselves.¹⁰⁹ Simplistically, the term identity (in the most general sense) can be reduced to the answer to the question “Who am I?” It is arguable, however, that at different moments people experience and represent their identities differently. The various dimensions of identity are dependent on the context in which the question of identity arises within a particular moment.¹¹⁰ Many research participants described their identities as Muslim as developing in three main stages.

Stage 1 – Growing Up As a Minority

Several participants expressed being viewed as the “other” or “outsider” when they first interacted with other individuals as a child. Two participants of interfaith Muslim backgrounds expressed dealing with their half Muslimness when they grew up in a predominantly white city in Oakville, Ontario.

Participant 7 was a mixed Muslim male in his early 30s whose father was Bengali-Muslim and mother was Norwegian-Lutheran. His mother identified as a cultural Lutheran and the participant mentioned that when he was growing up celebrating

¹⁰⁹ Kevin Vyrant et al. “Identity,” in *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism*, eds. Larry T. Reynolds & Nancy J. Herman-Kinney (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2003).

¹¹⁰ Gé Speelman, *Keeping Faith: Muslim-Christian Couples and Interreligious Dialogue* (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Meinema, 2001), 31.

Christmas was more of a cultural and even nationalist event for his family: “My mom wasn’t really religious at all, anything that we celebrated was more for cultural reasons. Like we celebrated Christmas because it was really big in Norway, but there was no religious aspect that we included in the celebration.” The participant mentioned his early experiences of school included others viewing him as “the other” and him wanting to fit in with the rest of his schoolmates. This was an issue that he describes as not entirely being attributable to his religious differences, but visible racial differences as well:

I think that there are other areas like on the race side and on the cultural side, like my name, which is confusing for people. So especially if it is in a Muslim setting, my full name is _____, so the middle and last name are Muslim but the first name everyone is so confused with that. So that comes up [*laughs*]. So on the race side, when I was a kid, I grew up in Oakville and at that time it was very, very white, so one of my best friends came up to me in grade 1 and he asked me, ‘_____, so people are talking around school, are you black or are you white?’ So there clearly were not many South Asians in Oakville at the time, so my answer at that time was, I didn’t even think about it because I was 6 years old, but I was like, ‘Oh no, no, I’m just very tanned!’ That was my response because of course I want to fit in, so that’s kind of what came up because I was mixed and no one assumed anyone was mixed I guess and those were the two kind of things that came up I guess when I think of me growing up in a mixed household. I wouldn’t necessarily say anything came up in the household really.

Often when individuals are confronted with the differences between themselves and people of other ethnic identities, they become aware for the first time of their own “ethnic identity.”¹¹¹ This process often first occurs when an individual is in late childhood/adolescence and then later on when the individual approaches mid- to late-adulthood. Despite his differences, this participant continued to maintain his religious upbringing and manage his multiple identities. One example he mentions is keeping his fasts while being on the basketball team at school:

¹¹¹ Gé Speelman, *Keeping Faith*, 37.

When I was in high school I stayed at home, even though my dad didn't fast during Ramadan because he was already taking a lot of medicine a few times a day and he has to drink water for sure, my dad didn't like that I fasted...I mean deep down he was proud, but my mom would be like, 'What are you doing?! Why are you fasting?!' But in high school, I was fasting and even when I had basketball tournaments during the day, I wouldn't drink any water even when I had a three-day tournament, so I was pretty good with that, even though my mom didn't want me to fast because she thought it was unhealthy and my dad and wasn't doing it himself. I still did it in high school and I also did it at residence in university, so I don't know if it really changed living at home versus on my own.

This participant demonstrates the management of multiple identities growing up as an interfaith Muslim individual within a predominantly white city.

Participant 2 was a mixed Muslim female in her late to early 30s whose father was Pakistani-Muslim and mother was a white, American who converted to Islam 5 years after her marriage:

So I grew up in Oakville with my parents, my father and mother both first-generation Canadians. So my dad was born in India and raised in Pakistan and then moved here to do university when he was in his teens. My mom is American and moved here for university. So they met in downtown Toronto. We grew up in a Muslim household, my mom converted but was raised Christian as my grandparents and cousins still are. The interesting thing is...I was told, but I wasn't born yet...my mother didn't convert until 5 years after they got married.

Participant 2 grew up as a Muslim with culturally conservative values. While her identity was a mixture of being religiously Muslim and culturally Caucasian, visibly she looked Caucasian. She describes her experience growing up in the town as:

We were raised fully Muslim and we were raised in Oakville, it's more multicultural now but in the 80s and 90s it was a very white and Christian place. So, I did not have any Muslim friends growing up and the only other Muslim kids I knew were through my family friends who lived in Toronto and Mississauga. I didn't go to school with any other Muslim kids, so I was always the unique one in the classroom. Talking point I remember being 6 and people asking: "How come you don't have any Christmas lights?" And I would say, "We don't celebrate Christmas," and they were so baffled. Which was funny because there was Judaism, but I guess there wasn't a big Jewish community in Oakville, so these kids had not experienced anyone who didn't celebrate Christmas. So I guess that we were just different. It was even within my family that my only other cousins on my dad's side grew up in Canada and their dad had also married a non-Muslim

woman as well, so we were a very interfaith family but my cousins weren't very hardcore, so we were the most Muslim in our family and that was our immediate family of 5, my parents, my two sisters, and I. So we didn't have a lot of friends and other outside Muslim influences.

This participant demonstrates grew up with primarily non-Muslim influences in Oakville.

She also discussed rigorously practicing her religion despite growing up lacking a Muslim community and as a minority within a predominantly white city.

Growing up we were really religious, we did all of the Eid celebrations, we fasted, we did all five pillars basically of Islam. I mean I haven't done Hajj or anything [*laughs*], but we did all of that. I even remember I went through a phase where I had a calendar and I tracked my 5 daily prayers on the calendar to see whether I was actually hitting my 5 daily prayers.

Both of these participants demonstrate how growing up as a religious and ethnic minority, although difficult at times, was manageable. However, there were two patterns that were demonstrated by participants in this study. First, the individual overcame being seen as the “outsider” and “other” and managed to maintain majority of his/her religious familial upbringing within his/her adolescence/early adult years. Second, the individual felt a pull towards maintaining their minority identity and another pull towards assimilating although this phase was primarily limited to their adolescence/early adult years.

Stage 2 – Loss of Muslimness

Going back to Speelman's argument, it is arguable that individuals experience and represent their identities differently depending on context and timing¹¹² and this argument was demonstrable within the data collected for this research. When individuals are making their own choices and on the path to discovering their identity, the most fundamental change they experience stems from discovering the value of belonging over

¹¹² Gé Speelman, *Keeping Faith*, 31.

belief, an insight demonstrable among individuals across many religions and denominations.¹¹³ This discovery of the value of belonging over belief was particularly apparent within the second stage of identity development.

Participant 2 described having a phase in high school where she was having an internal battle with herself regarding drinking alcohol and mentioned how she had years during which she would drink and years during which she would abstain from alcohol:

I had a really strange flip-flop...like when I was probably grade 8 and grade 9, that's when people start drinking and I was like "No way, it's bad, it's haram, I'm not gonna do it," but then from a social perspective you miss out on all of the partying and everything. Like I would go to parties and I wouldn't drink and it is really not that fun. So in high school, it was really strange, but I alternated years like one year I drank and the next year I don't drink and then the next year I drank again. So I kind of had this battle with myself on where I would get out on that and by the time I left high school I was like, "I drink," that is what it is. Honestly I think it was from a social perspective too much of a sacrifice for me too. I know this may be bad to say but growing up in a Western country, that's just how it is. I think it also was because I didn't have other Muslim friends. Maybe if I had a group of other Muslim friends, it could have been different, but that just didn't exist. Like I grew up in Oakville and then I went to school at Queen's University, which is also a super white school.

Social pressures, such as being immersed in a setting that places a strong emphasis on drinking culture, and growing up as a minority Muslim within a secular society can arguably be factors that influenced this participant's drinking. Throughout her early adolescence and later adult years, she explored her Muslim identity and still maintained certain rituals that she followed when she was younger:

I am less religious now than I was growing up from like an external perspective, so those obvious things that you see from outside, I definitely do less of those things. I continued to fast into university and then I stopped when I started working and the initial reason was because they say that you shouldn't fast when you are travelling, which is up to interpretation these days in the modern world, I had a really long commute, like an hour each way commuting to work and a long day. When I first started work my parents were like, "Maybe you shouldn't fast

¹¹³ Jon M. Sweeny & Michal Woll, *Mixed-Up Love: Relationships, Family, and Religious Identity in the 21st Century*, (New York: Jericho Books, 2013), 40.

because you have such a long day and you might get sick.” I fasted during the winter Ramadans, but when it became summer, it became harder so I stopped and I haven’t gone back since.

To date, participant 2 has a strong sense of her Muslim identity, which has socio-culturally evolved with her life experiences as a minority living in the West.

Similar to participant 2, participant 12 also strayed away from her Muslimness during specific times in her life. Participant 12 is from a Bengali-Muslim family and describes herself as a culturally observant Muslim. Her husband is a Protestant and she has younger children. She describes her Muslim identity shifting when she started university and was autonomous from her parents:

So I would say I am less religious now than I was growing up. I would say that my religious practices now are strictly in the cultural sense, so we’ll participate in Eid with my family, I will go to the occasional Jummah prayer with my sister if she wants to go, but I don’t go out of my way to do that and I don’t pray regularly or anything...I would even say that I am a non-observant Muslim, so my values are Muslim and I was raised a Muslim. So I have that upbringing in terms of my belief system, but I am not really practicing... This shift happened when I started university, I left home, I was out on my own, I was questioning more and at that point when I started distancing myself. So I would say that university was the first step and the second is when maybe I was 25-26 and at that point was when I became very non-observant and so from that point forward I was non-observant.

This participant grew up in a moderately observant Muslim household, but as she became more independent and was given opportunities to explore her own personal level of religiosity, she became a non-practicing yet cultural Muslim. Both of these participants demonstrate a shift in their Muslimness, but their life experiences and their periods of straying away from their Islamic identity did not necessarily imply that it was completely lost forever.

Stage 3 – Finding Muslimness

French Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has put forward a possible explanation for the fact that, on the one hand, individuals can be substantially influenced by the culture in

which they grow up, yet on the other hand, they are capable of changing the cultural patterns that they acquired through their upbringing in childhood.¹¹⁴ He goes on to further explain that changes in social structures are possible since the individuals who function within these structures (the bearers of culture) have the ability to change, especially when they become conscious of the invisible rules that they observe.¹¹⁵ These changes usually occur when there is a life-changing event or when the individual encounters others who act differently. This notion of shifting ideas regarding unconscious values and ways of living was evident within participants interviewed for this research.

Participant 18 is a Muslim female whose parents were from India. Her parents immigrated to Canada in the early 1970s, but were divorced in her early teens. Her husband is French-Canadian, who grew up going to Catholic school. She mentions that she had a disconnect from her Muslim identity when she was younger:

As soon as I hit puberty, my mother was like, ‘Oh no, you can’t play with boys,’ it became very much like conscious of the fact that I was a female, and on top of that a female Muslim and I had these conservative values that I had to respect, which didn’t really bother me when I was younger. So that created a lot of conflict within my teens because there was this push and pull between me wanting to live a Western, progressive lifestyle that my friends had, but at the same time being pulled in at home to a more conservative, more family-centric lifestyle, which for my mother revolved around religion. So religion was very much important to her, but not to me. And for my father, as long as you were doing things culturally, he was happy, but other things like did I pray on Friday, was not relevant to him. I was very much over the whole institution because it was kind of shoved down my throat growing up.

In early adolescence, she began to question religion and her Muslimness because her mother, who was more religious than her father, made her very consciousness of her gender and the conservative nature of their religion. This made participant 18 stray away from religion since she felt that it was “being shoved down her throat growing up.”

¹¹⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 168.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 169.

However, she describes having a particular life event in her early adulthood that changed her outlook on her Muslim identity:

Then my father got sick in 2006-2007 and all of a sudden religion came back and became a lot more important and it really crystallized and I was very much responsible in terms of what to do with him and I knew that he wanted a Muslim funeral, it wasn't just like burying him in a Muslim way. For us, to be cathartic and to have closure, all the things that we grew up with religiously became important.

For this participant, it was the life-changing event of her father passing away that brought her back in touch with her Muslim identity and helped her see the importance of her Muslimness within her life overall. She attributes this event with why she believed that it was significant for her to have an Islamic wedding ceremony, a *nikaah*:

Without realizing it, things that I didn't think were that important to me from my religious background, became very important and that became reinforced again when my partner and I started talking about getting married, he was shocked. He thought we would just have a Justice of the Peace type person, somebody neutral and not religious, not from his religion or my religion that could do it. The more I thought about it, I was like, no, for this to be meaningful, it is important to have an imam and give it a blessing that was meaningful for me and I don't know why it was meaningful, it was very much meaningful. This is why we reached out to imam Faizal, in the end that was the most important part of my wedding, it wasn't the party or the gifts, it was the things that the imam said which were in English, thank God [*laughs*]. They had meaning and they had meaning for my partner too because he could connect with those values.

This participant and her partner were both lawyers, so her husband was very thrown off when he saw how much participant 18 wished to have a religious wedding ceremony. She was able to reconnect with her Muslimness after the death of her father and marrying out of her religion made her more conscious and aware of her Muslim identity.

In *Being Both: Embracing Two Religions in One Interfaith Family*, author Susan Katz Miller draws upon original surveys and interviews with parents, students, teachers, and clergy, as well as her own data, to chronicle interfaith marriages and families in the

United States.¹¹⁶ An important finding that she mentions is that being in an interfaith relationship/marriage allows participants to become more in touch with their identities:

The survey data supports this anecdotal evidence of intensifying spiritual or religious practice. When asked how their relationship to their own religion or religious heritage had changed since joining an interfaith group, about a third of the parents chose, “I have a deeper knowledge of my own religion/religious heritage.” And almost a third agreed that they have more interest in their own religion. About 20 percent said they feel a greater spiritual connection to their own religion. Only 6 percent said they felt more alienated from the religion in which they were raised.¹¹⁷

This demonstrates that individuals were able to solidify their Muslimness while being in an interfaith marriage because they were more consciously aware of their identity as a result of negotiating difference within their relationship as a result of its interfaith dynamic. The common misconception is that interfaith couples and families are often seen as being shallow with their religious beliefs, but the data supports that detailed identity descriptions testify to a deepening of religious thought and engagement.

Participant 18 also mentioned that her *nikaah* ceremony allowed her non-Muslim partner to connect with Islamic marital values as well. Miller’s data adds: “More than half of the respondents said their knowledge of their partner’s religion had deepened. More than a third said they were more interested in their partner’s religion, and more than a quarter felt a greater “spiritual connection” to their partner’s religion.”¹¹⁸ Within the data collected for this research, at times it was the case that non-religious partners were able to connect with their partners’ Muslim identity. Participant 8 was a prime example of this; she was 26 years-old and from an Irish-Christian background, but converted to Islam after making a group of Muslim friends (including her husband) in Glasgow while

¹¹⁶ Susan Katz Miller, *Being Both*.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

doing her Master's degree abroad. Her husband is an Indian-Muslim and she currently lives in Glasgow, UK and her husband lives in India. She identified more as an Atheist prior to conversion, but "Now, there has been a complete 180 [*laughs*]. Now I do believe that there is a God and I believe that even though I am not practicing, like I don't pray, I don't do this or that, I still do feel that there is somebody or something looking out for me." She attributes her interest in religion and spirituality to her husband and the way he is with his Muslim identity:

Yeah I think my interest continued to grow purely seeing his faith in God. Anytime something went wrong, he would be like, 'It's okay, just God testing us. We'll get through it.' [*laughs*] I think that was something that really got to me, how can you blindly say that you'll be fine and it always is fine, it always was. Whether immediately or in a week's time or a few hours, whatever we were going through always worked itself out.

She was able to turn to religion when facing hardships and finding a sense of peace and hope when things did not go the way she wished. She adds that it helped her have a more positive outlook on life and even attributed a life-changing event she experienced to her experience of religion:

I think since I started believing in God again, my outlook on life has been more positive than it used to be. So that, I guess all started during my Master's degree, I went to Malawi for 6 weeks and I was a group of people and I didn't get along with any of them and I was really missing my partner, he wasn't able to come unfortunately, the time difference was an hour, but the Internet and the WiFi was horrendous, so we weren't able to communicate well, then I received some really bad news and I thought that I was just about to lose a friend and I would never see them again and that would be the end of that and there was nothing that I could do about it. So for the first time in years, I actually started praying. It was the strangest sensation because I felt that there was someone wrapping themselves around me and comforting me. I think it was from that point that I thought, 'Hmm...maybe there is something to this religious stuff, I may look into that now.' [*laughs*]

Participant 8 sought comfort in religion when she was alone in Malawi and this discovery in her religiosity which assisted her with coping with the solitude and hardships that she

was experiencing at the time can be attributed to her partner's role in her religious life. As demonstrated by the two participants discussed above, it is apparent that there is a correlation between finding faith and constructing intimate relationships with a partner who is of the same faith or one who is of a different faith.

There were also instances within the research where both partners helped each other find their Muslim identity. According to the data collected in Miller's research, more than half of the respondents said their knowledge of their partner's religion had deepened, more than a third said they were more interested in their partner's religion, and more than a quarter felt a greater "spiritual connection" to their partner's religion.¹¹⁹

In the case of participants 16a and 16b, their differences actually brought them closer together and closer to discovering their spiritual, cultural, and faith identity. Participant 16a was from a Lebanese-Muslim background and her partner, participant 16b, was raised Catholic but converted to Islam after finding an interest with the religion and Middle Eastern culture. Participant 16a had a moderately Muslim upbringing, but found that she actually became closer to her religion by being in a relationship with a non-Muslim male:

There are no disadvantages to being in an interfaith relationship, like I am so happy that I am in an interfaith marriage and I wouldn't want it any other way. I wouldn't want to marry someone who was the same religion as me if I could go back in time because I learned so much, if I was with someone who wasn't the same religion as me, I wouldn't have the eagerness to learn. Like my sister is married to a Muslim guy and they don't talk about religion, it has really made me become closer to God.

She argues that she was more conscious and in-tune with her Muslim identity as a result of being with a non-Muslim partner. She says that she had more conversations with her non-Muslim partner about religion than her sister has with her husband who is Muslim.

¹¹⁹ Susan Katz Miller, *Being Both*, 88.

Heather al-Yousuf discusses the awareness of differences when discussing her research on negotiations regarding faith and identity in Muslim-Christian marriages in Britain:

The encounter with difference tended to sensitize Muslims and Christians to the view of their faith from outside, whether this meant accepting or disrupting that critique. ‘Ours is a high-maintenance relationship,’ said one woman. ‘I wouldn’t have had to think so much about what I really believe and what really matters if I’d married someone of the same background.’¹²⁰

What the data for this research and Al-Yousuf’s data suggests is that religious differences can actually be beneficial for finding one’s religious identity and cultural expression.

Similarly, participant 16b is more interested in Middle Eastern rituals than participant 16a even though participant 16b is Caucasian and participant 16a is Lebanese:

Participant 16b: There’s part of the reception where you have, I don’t know if it’s the Islamic culture or if it’s the Lebanese culture, you have the drummer coming out and the couple will be wailing on the drum the entire time and that’s a very traditional, I think that may be Lebanese.

Interviewer: Yeah I believe that is a Middle Eastern tradition.

Participant 16a: We’re not doing that [*laughs*].

Participant 16b: I think that’s the only argument that we have regarding culture, that I want the Middle Eastern drum and she does not. I think it’s pretty cool.

These two individuals were able to assist each other with developing their cultural and religious identities. They both discussed that they agreed with each other since the beginning of their relationship despite their religious differences as well:

What really worked with him and I is that we don’t have very many differences when it comes to religious beliefs. Everything we agreed upon, so there was never a feud or argument. Myself going into it, I did come from a religious upbringing, but I wasn’t constantly thinking about it. I had questions myself. So when we asked the questions together, we would find out the answers together and then from there we would be like, ‘Oh this makes a lot of sense.’ So we just agreed on a lot.

¹²⁰ Heather al-Yousuf, “Negotiating Faith and Identity in Muslim-Christian Marriages in Britain,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 17, no. 3 (2006): 326.

A common trend seen within interviews was partners assisting each other with faith and cultural identity development. Despite religious and cultural differences, majority of the participants had similar levels of religiosity. This allowed them to have strong relationships since they both had similar morals and values.

The three stages of identity development for participants were consistent throughout the research. Most of the participants mentioned that growing up as a minority, they juggled fitting in and maintaining their sense of Muslimness within the respective Western societies they resided in as children and during early adolescence. Throughout their later adolescence and early adult years, many of the participants were placed in situations where they were able to find their individual Muslim identities separate from those instilled by their parents due to increased autonomy. During this second stage, there was generally a loss of faith and Muslimness as participants explored their personal values and beliefs. Finally, within the last stage participants were able to reconnect with their Muslim identity, whether it was because of substantial life events, interpersonal relationships, or even romantic partners. However, the identity that the participants gained was different than the ones they had within their early childhood. This development goes back to the idea that individuals experience and represent their identities differently within various periods of their lives. Sweeny and Woll write:

Whether you are more spiritual than religious, a hyphenated combination of traditions, confident in your identity as one of the “nones,” or morphing and transitioning from one of those categories to any number of others, we are all in the same boat of having to figure it out, find our way, and make our lives ones that matter. And we all encounter those from many other paths, whether as friends, family, colleagues, or, yes, romantic partners. Cultivating an understanding of ourselves as well as an openness to understanding each other, and doing so consciously and reflectively, could not be more important.¹²¹

¹²¹ Jon M. Sweeny & Michal Woll, *Mixed-Up Love*, 52.

One could argue that the final identities that participants formed were postmodern in nature and multidimensional as a result of their life experiences. These postmodern experiences are not exclusive to Muslims since being religiously “outside the box” has become almost normative today among members of most religious groups.

Postmodern Muslimness

Many of the participants in this research identified as culturally Muslim, which they often defined as being as non-observant but oriented towards the socio-cultural aspects of Islam. With regard to defining culture critically, Tomoko Masuzawa writes:

“Culture” is for us one of the most important reality-constituting terms, or key words; it embodies the spectrum of intellectual responses to the “general pattern of change” that we associate with modernity, such as industrialization, democratization, and, we may add in light of the more recent works by Edward Said, Eric Wolf, Michael Taussig, and others, the forceful globalization of “the West” in the form of colonial and postcolonial processes.¹²²

Culture is constantly evolving, especially in today’s globalizing world. Postmodern definitions of “Muslimness” can be seen as primarily ethnic and cultural identifications among individuals rather than religious ones.

Additionally, William Cantwell Smith discusses how the word “islam” itself can have diverse connotations, which defies the mainstream idea that it can only be practiced in uniform ways. He discusses that “islam” refers to three related yet different things:

First, there remains the verbal noun of which we have been speaking: the self-commitment of an individual Muslim. This is his own personal submission to God, the act of dedication wherein he as a specific and live person in his concrete situation is deliberately and numinously related to a transcendent divine reality which he recognizes and to a cosmic imperative which he accepts. It is immediate and existential. It involves a decision, private and inalienable. His personal submittingness – if we may use such a term – is of course quite distinct from any

¹²² Tomoko Masuzawa, “Culture,” in *Critical Terms For Religious Studies* ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 70.

other person's. Secondly and thirdly there are the empirical actuality and the Platonic ideal of a total Islamic system as an institutionalized entity. This is a generalized pattern, of 'the religion' in the one case as tangible reality, a mundane phenomenon historical and sociological, and in the other case as it ideally is at its conceivable best.¹²³

The first is the self-commitment of a Muslim to God, which can be translatable to one's own personal religiosity. The second and third are the more institutionalized forms of religion that are seen as the socio-historical remnants of generational patterns of individuals practicing Islam. The first "islam" is what we are seeing with Muslims in interfaith marriages and can be argued as being classified as the little tradition aspect of Islam.

Language

The knowledge, values, and norms of a culture are shared through language and this was a common factor that several participants found to be important when it came to their identity. Dr. Khalid Sohail was born into a Muslim family, but identified as an Atheist and Humanist. One of the factors that he considered to be important within his identity and within his relationships was language:

I realized that all of the women that I dated in Canada were all non-Muslims, they were all white Canadian. So then I realized that being a writer, because I'm also a poet and a therapist, so my curiosity was that I love a woman and the women that I loved and dated they don't know my language, I speak Urdu or Punjabi and they speak English. Not only did I speak Urdu and Punjabi, I write poetry in Urdu. So the thing that is special to me, the poetry of love that I write I cannot share with my sweetheart because she does not understand. And when I'm translating that it doesn't sound very good.

Although his religious beliefs were different than traditional constructs of Islam, he found that language was a significant part of his identity and he wished to share that with his partner.

¹²³ William Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, (New York: Fortress Press, 1991), 117.

Similarly, a participant in Gé Speelman's research on Muslim-Christian couples in the Netherlands found language to be more significant than institutional religious aspects within the development of his children's identity:

A Dutch woman with a Moroccan spouse relates how her husband, although he neither attended the mosque very often, nor insisted that their children receive an Islamic education, did find it extremely important that their children listen to the music of the Egyptian singer Umm Kouloum. For him this music was, as it were, the soul of Arabic culture.¹²⁴

Creative cultural expression through a specific language (i.e. poetry and music) was also important to some participants as the language represented intimate aspects of their religious and cultural identities.

People's Knowledge Concerning the World

Due to globalization, individuals now have an increased concern for and sense of connection to the world. Many individuals see religion relatively and in relation to other aspects of life and theory. A few participants managed their postmodern Muslimness through critical-thinking and opportunities to study religion academically. Participant 4, a Muslim male who married a Hindu female in the United States, discusses how he began to question Islam's stance on intermarriage and how other disciplines and access to information made him look at religion more critically:

I guess the fact is I learned more about my religion and the world through my understanding of science, mathematics, biology, and evolution. It doesn't make sense to follow just a book, there are so many things missing from that book yet that book put rules on how to govern certain things in our society and in our lives when there is no mention of these advancements or historic data that is available, so as I learned that, I went further and further with religion because how can a book that talks about the world and the universe being created not mention data source once? It doesn't make any logical sense, either those things have been around or they haven't. Now if you can add a record of a giant flood wiping the whole planet Earth, it doesn't exist. Like if you read about it and you Google it, you'll see that it didn't happen. The way I see it is if it doesn't logical sense or

¹²⁴ Gé Speelman, *Keeping Faith*, 42.

historical sense then why do we follow such a book, again it does have good moral stories and there is a lot to learn from it, but countless works of fiction have those too.

This participant formed notions and ideas regarding religion through his understanding of other areas of knowledge and advancements throughout history. Having the privilege to develop knowledge about the world was not generally accessible to prior societies and generations; these increased understandings have allowed for creative, individualistic, postmodern methods of how contemporary Muslims in interfaith marriages negotiate their faith and identity.

This process of education has also led to the objectification of religion in secularized, Western settings. As a result of widespread literacy and mass media, ordinary Muslims have become increasingly familiar with doctrinal concepts and forms of religious reasoning that were only exclusively available to religious scholars. The expansion of literacy and mass media has led to two phenomena. First, some ordinary Muslims (predominantly within secular, Western societies) look at religion in a more balanced way where they are able to consider all aspects of it and differentiate between whether it is compatible with their lifestyles as minorities living in the West. Second, some ordinary Muslims romanticize how Islam was practiced in the past. These observations among ordinary Muslims has resulted in an “objectification of the religious imagination,” which implies that practices that were observed somewhat unreflectively in the pre-modern period are now microscopically analyzed and consciously deliberated and debated.¹²⁵ In the case of participant 4, we see the latter where he is able to have access to

¹²⁵ Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 53.

doctrinal concepts and forms of religious reasoning, which he determined are not practical to his lifestyle as a minority residing in the West.

Values and Norms

Values vary and are subjective to groups or individuals (i.e. families, peers, societies). They influence attitudes and behaviours and include constructs such as morals, ethics, and social values. Many of the participants within the research were more concerned about their partners respecting their social values rather than institutionalized religious rules. For example, participant 9 (Muslim female married to Agnostic Canadian) did not find it problematic to not have her son circumcised, which is a strict Islamic ritual when a male son is born.

So we found out we were having a boy, so the first thought I had in terms of my mom was circumcision because it is in the *sunnah*. My partner was not comfortable with me doing that and didn't want that choice for our son, so that was a bit of an issue and I was worried that my mom would be upset that we weren't doing it. So in the end, we didn't do that, I think that she was a bit upset about it and didn't understand why we didn't do it. But she got over it, she made comments here and there.

However, she found drinking in front of family members to be more against her values. She discusses her feelings towards her husband drinking in front of her parents within the interview:

I feel pretty strongly about certain things that I don't want to do in front of our elders, so I drink but I would never do that in front of my mom, but my partner has done that occasionally in front of my mom and that has upset me, but I can't control that, he's done a lot in terms of accommodating my family. That can certainly cause discord when you have different expectations of how your beliefs fit within the larger family structure.

For this participant, it was important for her and her partner to behave a certain way in front of her parents, which included not drinking alcohol in front of them. Ritualistic aspects of religion such as circumcision, however, were less significant for the participant

indicating a shift in her definition of what it means to be Muslim versus what it may mean for her mother. Norms can be seen as translations of values into guidelines for behaviour. Growing up in a Muslim household, the participant may have been taught that drinking alcohol was against Muslim norms and values, which is why although she may find it permissible behind closed doors, she would not want to do this in front of her parents since she wishes to be respectful of their values and norms.

Similar to participant 9, participant 4 (Muslim male married to Hindu female) discussed how out of respect for his parents he would not discuss his aversion to institutionalized religion:

I would say that as I became more independent and had my own independent thought, I went away from religion. In a way, looking back, it was always kind of there amongst parents and amongst other people, there is always that fear of what are they going to think of me? I don't think I ever had the fear of if I ever did this I would go to hell, I lost that fear before I graduate high school somewhere between near the end of high school. So it was out of the respect for the parents and how they were going to react.

As the participant started to become more autonomous and began to explore his own personal religiosity, he strayed away from religion despite his conservative childhood upbringing. He mentions that he was always fearful of what his parents would think of him and how they would react, so he did not discuss his personal religiosity with his parents as an adult as a sign of respect to their Muslim identity.

Being courteous of differences between the religiosity of parents and their personal religiosity/spirituality was a common trend among participants. Even though most participants had religious upbringings, many of them would withhold certain aspects of themselves as adults out of respect for what their parents wanted. Giddens describes South Asian second-generation individuals in Western countries having a 'distinct' pattern with parental expectation to conform to norms of cooperation, respect,

and family loyalty.¹²⁶ Regardless of whether second-generation Muslim individuals in Western societies develop different ways of expressing their religiosity (or lack of religiosity), respect and family loyalty remained consistent norms exuded within their value systems. For example, a frequent norm observed was the prohibition on drinking alcohol. Although many of the participants said they viewed drinking as a norm and would do it socially and at home, they would not want themselves or their partners to drink in front of their parents.

Faith negotiation is a necessity to ensure a strong and nourishing relationship and sometimes that meant making compromises for each other's religious upbringing and resultant creative cultural expressions. Several of the non-Muslim participants also discussed how they would not eat pork around their partners and within the household not because they were Muslim or objected to pork themselves, but because it mattered to their partners and they felt it was respectful of their beliefs.

Symbols and Customs

Although the distinct boundary symbols of ethnicity can shift dramatically as time progresses, the same does not always apply to cultural patterns. Conversely, it is apparent that there is a relation between boundary markers and elements of culture (such as alcohol and pork), which were seen as symbols garnering disapproval. The fact that certain symbols acquire great significance for the members of a particular ethnic group – even if their specific observances vary over time – says something about what is crucially important and significant for people and what the central values and norms of that ethnic group are. The previous example regarding alcohol consumption in front of family

¹²⁶ Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, (Cambridge: Polity Publications, 1992).

members can demonstrate how family values are of significance to Muslims even if they are manifested in different ways generationally.

Another symbolic custom that emerged as significant among female Muslim participants was the importance of their father's permission for their male partners to marry them. The significance of the bride's marriage guardian is a custom that is substantial within the Islamic tradition:

Marriage in Islam has the attributes of a contract that is not much different in essence from one that is concluded in the economic or political realm of life. The solemnization of the marriage rite (*akad nikah*) signifies the contract in both symbolic and practical terms. According to the prevailing Islamic marriage law, the essential elements of the rite are the bride and bridegroom, the bride's marriage guardian (*wali*), two male witnesses, the brideprice, referred to in Islam as the *mahr* or *mas kawin*, the marriage officer who is normally the local *imam* (religious leader) or *kadi* and the declaration of offer (*ijab*) and acceptance (*kabul*). The consent of the bride is also important before the marriage can be solemnized.¹²⁷

The *wali* or the parental authority is a mandatory figure within the marriage ceremony in Islam. Regardless of whether or not female Muslim participants had an Islamic marriage ceremony, they found it important for their partners to ask their fathers for their hands in marriage as a symbolic and customary gesture.

Participant 15 is an Indonesian, Muslim female residing in Spain who was married to a Spanish, Catholic male. She had a very democratic upbringing and her father emphasized her development of independent and individualistic values. For example, after high school her father encouraged her to move out and made her responsible for her own finances and managing herself at a young age:

My dad was more democratic, so he raised me with more Western values rather than Eastern values. For example, we got back to Indonesia and during my senior high school, they lived in Jakarta, but I lived in Bandon, which is a separate city 3

¹²⁷ Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan, "Women, Divorce and Islam in Kedah," *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 1, no. 2 (1986): 185.

hours away. He put me in a nice house with my sister and said that he didn't want to raise his kids under the same roof as him. So since a very young age, my father raised me with values, which normally Eastern parents wouldn't do to their kids. Especially Muslims right because they would keep their daughters with them until they are married normally, but not with my parents. He would give me money as well and I had to manage my own finances from an early age.

Despite her liberal, secular, and westernized upbringing, she still appreciated it when her future husband asked her father for permission for her to travel with him to meet his family in Spain.

In 2014 when we were still dating, my husband said that he would like to take me to a vacation to my own country. We arranged things, he said one thing before we go, 'Baby, I have arranged this lunch date with you, me, and your father, so the three of us and let's meet up in the middle of the city for lunch.' So then we meet up, so then suddenly during the meal, he asked my father, 'I would like to have permission to take your daughter to my country for two weeks.' I was actually very surprised with that because first of all, it is not a Spanish thing or a Western thing to ask permission, it's a completely Eastern or even a Muslim thing, but the fact that he did that, I really appreciated that. It showed me that he was aware that he was living in an Eastern country and dating an Eastern girl, so he asked my dad's permission and my dad said, 'Oh for two weeks?' and he said, 'Don't worry, we're going to stay with my parents and I would like to take [*participant name omitted*] because now that I know her family, I would also like her to know my family.' That was very nice of him and my dad said, 'Okay [*participant name omitted*] can you give us 5 minutes,' so I was actually being kicked out [*laughs*]. And I went back after 5 minutes and I asked my husband when we went home, 'What were you talking about during those 5 minutes?' and he replied, 'Your father asked me what my intention is by taking you to my country because if you have no further intention and this is only a casual relationship and you only want to take her for a vacation then maybe you can go to some other countries and not introduce her to your family, but it sounds like you are having a real relationship and I said that I am serious with your daughter and we are in a serious relationship and that is why I am asking for your permission.' That was one of the first moments where I was completely surprised about how much respect there was between the differences.

His cultural awareness demonstrated how serious the participant's partner was about their relationship. She appreciated it and saw it as a sign of respect for her culture, identity, and customary notions of parental permissibility.

Similarly, participant 13, a South Asian, Muslim woman married to a British, Anglican man, describes her experiences when her husband asked for her hand in marriage. This participant was divorced and had previously been married to a conservative Muslim partner. This event was especially significant and important to her because she had experienced domestic violence in her prior marriage:

In many ways, it was very simple, him coming to my family and asking for my hand in marriage. We did it in the arranged marriage kind of way, we did it at my younger sister's place and he showed up with flowers and sweets for my parents. Before he was leaving for there I told him that he should bring photos and he was confused, I told him that this process was for my parents to vet him and normally that's done by the elders of each family and because he was coming as a grown man without his parents and family it would be nice so they could feel like that they would get to know you. He went and pulled out all of the family photos that he had and he took them and it was one of the most touching and beautiful things that I have ever experienced in my life. He told my parents, 'I have photos, do you want to see my family?' and it built a sense of connection and safety between him and my parents in a language that they understand. The conversation went on and they shooed me away to make chai [*laughs*]. My mom just looks at him and told him, 'You seem like a good man and it seems that you are interested in marrying my daughter and that's great, but I just have to ask you some questions –' and then she just burst into tears, 'You probably know that she has gone through a lot so I need to know that you are going to take care of her.' And he didn't know what to do and was like 'ahh' because this is not his cultural framework [*laughs*] and also this is not how we meet the parents in my world. So he was like, yeah I will take care of her and she will also take care of me. She was like, I will also need your commitment that you will raise the children Muslim. So he was like, yeah, I care for your daughter a lot and my only goal is to keep her happy in life. So they hugged it out and my sister is weeping and I was worried. And then yeah, we got married the following April.

Her partner's ability to demonstrate cultural sensitivity and awareness of customary practices of asking for the participant's hand in marriage was very significant for the participant.

For both participants 15 and 13, their partners' cultural understanding of parental permission went a long way towards strengthening their respective relationships. It also demonstrated respect for the differences within each of their relationships. The symbolic

significance behind this particular custom can be reduced to respect for familial values as well since it demonstrates respect for parental authority and familial permission. This symbolic significance exhibits that even though both participants did not necessarily share orthodox Islamic religious views and had more secular, westernized values than their parents, an important aspect of their Muslimness was the importance they placed on family and collectivism.

Many participants were more concerned about socio-cultural aspects of their upbringing rather than strictly their religious instruction; concerns that translated into unique cultural expressions of “Muslimness.” The postmodern Muslim culture as demonstrated by the data collected for this research contains the following elements: language, people’s knowledge concerning the world, values and norms, and symbols and customs. As seen within the examples above, family is significant within the lives of individuals with postmodern Muslim identities. Generational differences were also prevalent among participants in the study and their parents. One issue where these differences often arose was regarding dating styles and mate selection and they often included differences regarding perceptions of intermarriage.

Generational Differences Regarding Dating Styles and Intermarriage

In *Mixed Marriages: 21st Century Phenomenon*, Dr. Khalid Sohail discusses differences between Eastern and Western cultural norms:

One of the primary differences I noticed was that the Western culture was fundamentally an individualistic rather than a communal culture. Thus there was far more emphasis on the individual’s rights rather than familial and communal rights. Society gave each person the right to decide his education, his profession,

where he wanted to live and also to choose his/her lover/spouse and made sure that couples could live independently.¹²⁸

There are clear differences that emerge between second-generation Muslim individuals brought up in the West and their first-generation Muslim immigrant parents. The clash between Eastern and Western, collectivist and individualistic, and postmodern and traditional religious values and identities tends to create conflicts among Muslim parents and their children residing in Western societies. These differences begin to surface particularly when it comes to mate selection and marital preferences among the younger generation.

Across faiths and denominations, religion looks different for young people than it did for their parents. The relationship between religion and modernity has often been approached in terms of the process of secularization or the progressive disappearance of religion.¹²⁹ This can occur generationally with the emergence of postmodern religious identities among second-generation individuals within Western societies, as discussed in the prior section of this chapter. On the one hand is the inverse relationship between the move away from of institutional religion and the increasing importance of subjective, individually-directed religion, and on the other hand, the narrowing of belief that religious rituals can influence physical reality.¹³⁰ These subjective notions of religion and rejection of religious rituals contributes to second-generation individuals being relatively indifferent to exogamy. In this particular study, the second-generation Muslim participants understanding of relationship compatibility differed from their parents' significantly, which caused them to contest parental authority over marriage and pursue

¹²⁸ Khalid Sohail, *Mixed Marriages: 21st Century Phenomenon*, (Lahore: Pakistan Books and Literary Sounds), 29.

¹²⁹ Gustavo Benavides. "Modernity," in *Critical Terms For Religious Studies* ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 196.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

exogamic marital preferences. These preferences are also a result of second-generation Muslims having a tendency to define compatibility in terms of origin and individual culture.¹³¹

For example, in a recent study was conducted by Jordan Cila and Richard Lalonde that examined young Muslim-Canadians and their personal openness to interfaith dating and marriage. Cila and Lalonde mention that families all over the world have some influence on who their children date or marry, but this varies cross-culturally.¹³² Muslim-Canadians face a pull and push factor regarding their dual-identities:

Young bicultural Muslim-Canadians are simultaneous exposed to two sets of norms about intimate relationships, one coming from their family (which values maintenance of tradition and endogamy) and the other coming from the mainstream culture (which values individual autonomy when choosing a romantic partner).¹³³

This pull and push factor relates back to the discussion regarding the transmission of values and norms from parents among postmodern Muslims. Yet, it also contributes to push and pull influences regarding second-generation Muslims finding their personal religious beliefs, dating differences, and the role of external influences, such as extended family.

Parental Influences Upon Religious Development

Among several of the participants, parental authority was a significant factor in their faith development. As a result, some participants expressed discontent with religion or became very proactive about establishing their own personal religious/spiritual identities.

¹³¹ Shehnaz Haqqani, “Gendered Expectations,” 83.

¹³² Jordan Cila and Richard N. Lalonde, “Personal Openness Toward Interfaith Dating and Marriage Among Muslim Young Adults: The Role of Religiosity, Cultural Identity, and Family Connectedness,” *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 17, no. 357 (2014).

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 365.

Participant 3, an interfaith individual with a half-Muslim, half-Catholic background discusses her struggle with developing her own independent religious identity separate from her mother's when questioned about parental influence on her religiosity/spirituality:

Interviewer: When you say that, are you implying that you feel like you might have been more confused when your parents had control of your spirituality?

Participant 3: Yeah because obviously they try and control and shape you into the person that they want you to be. That's just how family is, but it is important that you have that freedom, especially with spirituality that is your own. You can't really let other people force you to be a certain way, so I think that is key and that they stay true to that and that they do their own thing. Even if it doesn't coincide with everyone else says, you need to do just what your heart is telling you to do.

Participant 3 had a predominantly Catholic upbringing, but grew closer to her Muslim identity within her young adult years and formally converted to Islam. Speelman discusses the role of the autonomy upon a child's faith development:

The autonomous Self emerges as children learn to distinguish themselves from other identities, especially that of the mother. According to these theories small children only learn that they possess an 'I' by attaining independence from their mothers. Thus the 'other' (represented by the mother) is that which the child needs to overcome in order to form an identity. 'The hostility of the child against the mother' is, according to Freud, a mark of healthy personality development' (Bons-Storm 1998, III).¹³⁴

An interesting issue that arises is that the hostility of an individual against a parent with regard to their personal religious development is seen as a sign of healthy personality development, yet children are mostly criticized by their parents for straying from the beliefs that were instilled upon them during childhood.

This is particularly evident among participant 4, who grew up with conservative, Pakistani-Muslim parents.

¹³⁴ Gé Speelman, *Keeping Faith*, 33.

So, throughout grade school, while we were living at home, I was definitely more religious, mainly because of the influence moving from Pakistan and living with fairly conservative parents and generally how brown communities were because they stick to their own, so most of my friends were Pakistani and from Karachi... But by the time that I got to college and away from home, I realized that religion was something that I only respected mainly for my parents and that I'm praying because I'm fearing God...that fear probably went away somewhere around junior high/high school.

In this situation, the participant's parents utilized religion as a means of control and instilling fear when disciplining him as a child. When the participant was able to gain an autonomous sense of self and further independence, he was able to develop his own personal religious identity, which he describes as a combination of Agnostic and Theist ideology. When the participant revealed to his parents that he was involved in an interfaith relationship with a Hindu woman, he had to fight for his personal beliefs and values as his parents disapproved of his relationship and marriage:

I have been threatened by my parents, both mom and dad, "We'll send you back to Pakistan, there this would have never happen," but logically if it was in Pakistan, where would I find a Hindu person to begin with. There are logical flaws in their arguments in that sense my parents didn't accept it at all. Even after the wedding they would bring up, "Oh so is she going to convert? Oh what are you doing? What kind of a Muslim are you?" Those things did come up, and I would say for the first year they came up, but then after that it was just like...until the child and then there were arguments about what he was going to be. And every time I would tell them what I do and what she does, our son figures out, he/she needs to do on his own. But the parents were definitely against it, family friends – there were a couple of family friends, people who I'm not very close to, but my parents were, would try and talk me out of it, but it didn't work. I respected them for trying to help my parents, I'm sure my parents asked them for it, but they were all civil about it, they all gave me their story and I gave them my side of the story and it was never forceful it was just, "Here's what we think _____ and what you should do, this is why we think it's wrong," and for me, "That's nice, and here's why I think it's right."

Here we can see the participant proactively fighting for his parents to understand that he has his own set of values and ideas regarding intermarriage and religious identity while his parents tried to make him doubt and question his Muslimness. What the participant

demonstrates is a healthy mark of personality development, but his parents and other external influences were attempting to sway the participant away from his personal beliefs. As a result of these experiences, the participant hopes that his son will not have a religious upbringing because he views religion as a mental barrier and compared it to psychological abuse as well:

Interviewer: So have you decided that your children will follow a particular religion –

Participant 4: I hope my son doesn't mainly because –

Interviewer: Doesn't?

Participant 4: I personally, yes, hope he does not. I think that religion...again this is my opinion, it might not sound polite or politically correct...I feel that religion is like a mental barrier that parents put on their kids. I don't differentiate it much from abuse, you know physical abuse is if you tie some child and tie their legs and tell them that they better not move. I find religion to be like that for the mind. "If you talk back to me, you will burn in hell," I think that's mental abuse, it might be taking it a little too far but you are restricting their creativity and you are restricting what they can or cannot do with the fear that is not existent, it is not very different from me saying, "If you talk back to me, I will slap you or make you cry or beat you." I don't see it to be any different granted that one won't hurt as much physically, but in my opinion, if you put a barrier on your child's mind you are kind of stopping their creativity in some sort of way.

The disapproval of his personal religious development by his family and external influences may have been a contributing factor for this participant not wanting his son to have any sort of a religious upbringing growing up.

Differences Regarding Dating Generationally

Many participants experienced conflict with their parents when they were dating. Some of these conflicts emerged because of generational differences within dating practices generally and other conflicts emerged because the participants were involved in relationships with non-Muslim individuals.

A common topic that participants mentioned was discomfort when dating due to generational differences regarding dating practices. Participant 2 mentioned how she found initially introducing her boyfriend/spouse to her parents unnerving:

So yeah, it took me a long time to bring my partner to meet my parents to the point where he basically said, “Are you ashamed of me? Why have you not introduced me to your family?” So then I had to. My mom knew very early on, but my dad did not, so it was 8 months until I introduced him to my dad and it was a bit quite after I introduced him to my extended family. My rationale for that was that in my extended family we didn’t see boyfriends coming around, people didn’t bring someone home until they were very serious...I remember being scared to introduce ___ to my dad kind of...you know...because he was non-Muslim and he was actually the second person I had ever introduced, I had introduced a boyfriend through university.

Discomfort while dating and feeling she had to hide her partner from her parents created a number of problems for the participant. Many participants had stories about how they withheld major developments in their romantic lives from their parents because of the generational and cultural differences that existed regarding modern dating practices.

Another common dating practice that exists within modern dating is travelling with potential long-term partners prior to marriage. However, this practice is not something that is considered permissible by many Muslim parents. Participant 12 discussed within her interview how initially she was concerned about discussing travelling with her partner prior to marriage with her parents, but she was brave enough to discuss it with them and they reacted passively:

I went on a number of lengthy trips and I was worried about telling my parents those things because I didn’t know how they would take that...but I kind of got over it and I explained to my mom, ‘Listen we’re going on an extended trip to San Francisco and Hawaii and it’s a really good opportunity for us to know each other,’ so once the first trip was done, they were okay with it.

Participant 12’s parents were more conservative when she was younger, but as she reached adulthood, they became more progressive with their values and were more

accepting with her postmodern identity. Reinders¹³⁵ finds that parental control decreases as their children approach adulthood and Axinn and Thornton's¹³⁶ research demonstrates the diminishing effect of parental preferences with an increase in age. Both of these findings are consistent with the data collected in this research.

An additional issue that often brought forth differing generational viewpoints was cohabitation among participants. After taking multiple extended trips with her partner, participant 12 mentions how she asked her parents permission regarding moving in with her partner:

When we got to about a year, I asked him what he wanted to do and he said that we should move in together, I told him that it's not okay with my parents and if we do we are going to have to tread carefully, but engagement is the next thing that they see in our relationship's future. So, I took a risk and I thought let's see what happens if I tell them that I am going to move in with my boyfriend and we are not going to be married [*laughs*]. It's funny because I had started the conversation on the phone because I couldn't actually bear to face my mother to have this conversation, I said, 'You know, we are two adults, we want to sort this out, we are very serious about each other, but we want to try living together before we make a further commitment, so this is the next step in the evolution of the relationship before we make that final decision.' So when I said it at first, my mother was very shocked and said, 'Well I guess you're an adult and you can make your own decisions, so okay.' So she hung up the phone, then I got a call 2 hours later and she basically was in hysterics saying that I couldn't do this because it was against our religion and our values and this is not okay and that she didn't raise us to be this way and it was not permissible.

Participant 12 still moved in with her partner demonstrating a healthy sense of autonomy and personal faith development. This move brought a bit of discomfort with her partner having to hide about them living together and also a few problems when they did finally get married:

¹³⁵ Heinz Reinders, "Contexts of Interethnic Friendships in Adolescence," *Journal of Educational Science* 7, no. 1 (2004).

¹³⁶ William G. Axinn & Arland Thornton, "The Influence of Parental Resources on the Timing of The Transition to Marriage," *Social Science Research* 21 (1992).

Here's the thing, my partner and I lived together a year and a half together before we got engaged and my parents live in Oakville, they don't live far away and that whole time they thought I was living with my roommate. And at the end of the day, what I haven't figured out is whether they truly believed whether I was living with my friends and roommates or if they knew that I was secretly living with my partner and didn't want to say anything and just overlook it. It really bothered my partner because we were lying, he even said that if they asked him he would not lie and tell them the truth. So that happened and I was shocked they never figured it out. But after we got engaged, I asked if we could move in and my mom gave me the death stare and said absolutely not, so I didn't bring it up at that point. Before we had our *nikaah*, my parents were like, 'Oh isn't my partner going to invite us over, we can see where you are going to be living?' So I had them over and I had to hide all of my stuff [*laughs*] and somehow we got through that. My mom after was like, 'Aren't you moving in now, where is your stuff?' I kind of had to cover all of that stuff, but I think that was one of the only deceptions in our relationship process that was directly related to religion and values.

Participants utilized modern dating techniques within their relationships, but at the cost of creating conflicting values between themselves and their parents and withholding information from their families. Similarly, several participants discussed how announcing engagements to non-Muslim partners brought forth additional hurdles, as extended family members were able to express their discontent with intermarriage.

The Role of the Extended Family

Regarding extended family, one participant mentioned: "Every situation is different and everyone feels differently about family, but if family is important to you, that is something that you should think about. The acceptance part doesn't just include the two people involved, but the extended family, your friends, and your family as well, so the question sometimes is how do they feel about it?" The role of the family sometimes was upsetting for participants to discuss as their families refused to accept their marriages or became confrontational when discussing their opposing views against intermarriage.

This was the case for both participant 8 and participant 9. Participant 8 was married to an Indian-Muslim male; she was of Irish-Christian descent and had converted to Islam, but has still not let her family know about her conversion. She describes when her extended family found out about her intermarriage:

Yeah, it was only when we came over to Ireland that we told my extended family, but turns out that mom had spilled the beans to my aunts and uncles already. So I had one in particular, who rang me up one day and she was telling me this story about how I was 5 years-old and participating in this school activity play and I had one line in the entire play and there was a word that I was having difficulty with and dad would spend hours and weeks trying to get me to say this word properly. Then the night of the play came and I said my line and I was so proud as a 5 year-old who had put in all of this work and said it properly. Then she was bringing it back to, 'Look if you marry him, your children won't be able to do that. They won't be baptized, they won't be christened, they won't have their first holy communion, and they won't this and that and it'll be difficult for them to be accepted because all of their friends will pick on them for being different, etc. It's an intercultural marriage and it's an interreligious marriage and I worked with women who were married to Muslims before and they were purely miserable and they all got divorced and the men treated them horribly, etc. Look what you not just break-up with him now and just save yourself the heartbreak?' She was basically saying that it was going to end in divorce and your life is going to be miserable if you marry him.

Even though she was hurt by her aunt having a negative reaction to her interfaith union, she mentions that she was more hurt by her immediate family's reaction:

The most hurtful thing was feeling that my immediate family, parents in particular, didn't support me. They didn't like the idea of me marrying him. They did say, 'Look, it could be a wonderful marriage or equally you could marry an Irish guy and it will be the worst marriage on the planet. You just don't know. We have no problems with you being friends with him, but we don't think it's a good idea for you to be romantically involved.'

Similarly, participant 9 also expressed an emotional incident where her uncle tried to dissuade her from marrying a non-Muslim male:

One of my uncles took me for a drive and he kind of was trying to dissuade me from making a decision, I don't remember the details because it was pretty upsetting at the time [*laughs*], he kind of made me cry, but yeah he was basically like, 'You don't know what you are doing. This isn't a good idea,' and telling me

that I was making the wrong choice and that it was going to ruin my life, so yeah. [laughs] Yeah, so I had to endure some of that.

Intermarriage sometimes meant distressing familial relationships since there were usually some bridges burned or torn as a result of differing views on exogamy within familial units.

Dr. Sohail discusses the significance of acceptance from the family when entering an interfaith marriage within his interview:

Interviewer: With regard to interfaith couples that you may have had in the past, what are some common issues that you may have seen?

Dr. Sohail: One is the acceptance of the family, where one or the other family does not agree or approve, so they give the marriage a hard time. It starts off on a strange note like someone not showing up or boycotting, but when there is a child involved it becomes more complex and then the dynamics change. Especially when it comes to naming the child because there is the identity issue, so that would be the second one. The third is if that there is a marital problem that they are having, they do not get the same support from the families as they would have got if they were from the same culture. Their support network is limited. They're kind of embarrassed...If you are not supported by your blood family you need to have other couples or friends who are in the same network. If you need to befriend mixed couples, so if you are struggling with an issue you know others in similar situations.

Dr. Sohail mentions that if there is a family disconnect as a result of opposing views regarding exogamy, it may be important to have the support of other individuals who are also in interfaith marriages. Some participants mentioned that they were able to find support groups within progressive religious centers. One example that was frequently mentioned by participants in the study from the Greater Toronto Area was the Noor Islamic Centre in Toronto, an LGBTQ-friendly progressive center where women often do *kutbahs* and men and women are able to pray side-by-side, making it easy for Muslims and their non-Muslim partners to go to mosque together.

Other participants who were unable to find support from their families were able to find interfaith marriage support groups through social media platforms such as Facebook. For example, one group online is the “Muslim-Christian and Interfaith Marriage Support” group, which caters globally to Muslims married to Christians based in London, UK. The group is network run by and for interfaith couples and they hold several meetings a year for couples in London to explore and share their experiences being in an interfaith marriage with similar couples in a safe, respectful, and friendly space. Additionally, Susan Katz Miller, author of *Being Both: Embracing Two Religions in One Interfaith Family*, discusses her experiences of being in an interfaith marriage and raising interfaith children in the U.S., and has started a Facebook group called the “Network of Interfaith Family Groups,” which is a place for interfaith families to share resources, converse, and create meet-ups and communities around the world. These means of forming support networks exist due to the globalization of communication and information sharing through virtual networks and social media.

Conclusion

The discussion of the issues above demonstrates that globalized Islam has created a new generation of Muslims in the West that exhibit complex religious identities. This new generation is also in contact with multiple races and religions, thus increasing the probability and rate of intermarriage.

Due to the increase in intermarriage and the development of new and complex Muslim identities, there are fears of assimilation and fears of deculturation stemming from parents of second-generation Muslims in the West. This chapter considered identity

management of young Muslim residing in the West, their postmodern notions of “Muslimness,” and the generational differences regarding dating styles and intermarriage they face by utilizing the lenses of globalization and migration.

The discussion on identity management considered the common stages of faith development evident among participants utilized for this research. The stages include growing up as a Muslim minority and demonstrating parental influences; a loss of Muslimness; and then finally, finding one’s own personal Muslimness as an adult.

Finding one’s personal Muslimness is tied into postmodern Muslim identities. Participants often were not as concerned about the organized components of the religion, but placed a higher emphasis on socio-cultural elements such as language, worldly knowledge, values and norms, and symbols and customs.

These new, complex identities also bring forth evident generational differences, particularly concerning dating styles and intermarriage. Parental influences upon religious development became clearer to participants as they struggled with their upbringing and their autonomous philosophies concerning their Muslim identity. Differences regarding dating styles generationally and the role of extended family was also considered within this portion of the chapter. It can be argued that religious practices and traditional norms are shifting as a result of globalization and intermarriage can be seen as a microcosmic representation of these changes.

IV

Pluralism: Intermarriage as An Exemplar For Positive Relations

When it comes to positive examples of pluralism within a society, few other examples are as powerful as intermarriage. Abdullahi An-Naim, an internationally recognized scholar of Islam and human rights in cross-cultural perspectives, states: “Considering inter-marriage as an indicator of inter-group relations in society, it can be explained as the linkage of two people with different cultural and behavioural norms and backgrounds grounded or based on religious, racial, or ethnic differences.”¹³⁷ The nature and dynamics of interfaith marriages can provide insight into the understanding of religion, race, and ethnic groups as they operate both within and between societies. Intermarriage raises questions about whether insiders and outsiders are willing to accept each other in a long-lasting, exclusive, and largely non-hierarchical relationship.¹³⁸

A demographic study done by the Pew Research Centre, based on an analysis of more than 2 500 censuses, surveys, and population registers, found that 2.2 billion Christians (32% of the world’s population), 1.6 billion Muslims (23%), 1 billion Hindus (15%), nearly 500 million Buddhists (7%), and 14 million Jews (0.2%) comprise majority of the global religious landscape.¹³⁹ Nearly three-quarters (73%) of the world’s people live in countries in which their religious group makes up a majority of the population and just over a quarter (27%) of all people live as religious minorities.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Abdullahi An-Naim, *Inter-Religious Marriages Among Muslims: Negotiating Religious and Social Identity in Family and Community* (New Delhi: Global Media Publications, 2005), 11.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Conrad Hackett & Brian J. Grim, *The Global Religious Landscape: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World’s Major Religious Groups as of 2010* (Washington: Pew Research Centre, 2012), 9.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 11.

In terms of the West, Christians comprise 77.4% of North America and 75.2% of Europe.¹⁴¹ The United States is home to 11.2% of all Christians globally, making it the country with the largest number of Christians. Jews comprise 1.8% of North Americans and 0.2% of European.¹⁴² Muslims comprise 1.0% of North Americans and 5.9% of Europeans.¹⁴³

This chapter will demonstrate how interfaith marriages among Muslims can be seen as a microcosmic representation of pluralistic relations within Western societies. Topics taken into account include: pluralistic awareness, post-modern weddings, and intermarriages of Muslims with polytheistic individuals.

Within Western societies, the three Abrahamic religions dominate the religious landscape.¹⁴⁴ It is important to begin our discussion by outlining the shared teachings in all three of the Abrahamic religions along with a brief analysis of Judeo-Christian positions on intermarriage.

Universality Among The Three Abrahamic Religions: Jewish and Christian Positions

Without a comprehensive understanding of the archetype of God within postmodern Western societies, today's growing consciousness of the significance of religious pluralism cannot be addressed accurately.¹⁴⁵ God is one of the most complex and difficult words within the English language as it is rich with layers and dimensions of meaning. As a result, defining the term can be problematic for individuals who are both

¹⁴¹ Conrad Hackett & Brian J. Grim, *The Global Religious Landscape*, 43.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 22.

¹⁴⁴ At the same time, the new study by the Pew Forum (2012) also finds that roughly one-in-six people around the globe (1.1 billion or 16%) have no religious affiliation, making this the third-largest religious group worldwide behind Christians and Muslims.

¹⁴⁵ Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and Gordon D. Kaufman, "God," in *Critical Terms For Religious Studies* ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 155.

religious and irreligious since it is susceptible to a variety of interpretations. However, within the three related monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, God can be seen as a projection of human needs and desires. God is the central and most powerful symbol in terms of which human life in postmodern Western societies has been ordered and oriented.¹⁴⁶

The ontology of the term “God” can be described as mirroring the fears and yearnings of society at each stage of its development. Karen Armstrong, a specialist on comparative religion, states: “The human idea of God has a history, since it has always meant something slightly different to each group of people who have used it at various points of time. The idea of God formed in one generation by one set of human beings could be meaningless to another.”¹⁴⁷ In Islam, the Qur’an is seen as the word of God, which raises the issue of whether the word of God can be consistently interpreted and understood throughout history. Indeed, the understanding of the word of God can be seen as parallel to the subjectivity that underlies the approval or disapproval of exogamy for Muslim women.

There are striking similarities in Judaic, Christian, and Islamic ideas of the divine. According to Armstrong, “Even though Jews and Muslims both find the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation almost blasphemous, they have produced their own versions of these controversial theologies.”¹⁴⁸ Similar parallels arise when it comes to the views of each religion on interfaith marriages and marriage in general. As demonstrated in Seamon’s study of Christian interfaith marriages in America, it is apparent that God is consistently seen as a unifying force within the lives of interfaith

¹⁴⁶ Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and Gordon D. Kaufman, “God,” 153.

¹⁴⁷ Karen Armstrong, *A History of God*, 20.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

couples and children.¹⁴⁹ The Islamic position concerning intermarriage was discussed previously, but now a brief discussion of Judeo-Christian positions will be considered.

Jewish Positions on Intermarriage

In Judaism, there is a similar fear of assimilation when compared to Islam regarding exogamy. Marianne Callahan conducted a study that looked at the negotiation of identity and difference of interfaith Jewish-Christian couples/marriages in the United States and argued that:

Intermarriage is considered by many Jewish leaders to be one of the most critical issues facing the Jewish people today. There is tremendous concern (and research findings to support) that when a Jew and Christian marry and raise a family, the likelihood of their children growing up to identify as Jewish greatly diminishes. The consequence of increasing intermarriage rates, it is feared, is the eventual assimilation of American Jews into the Christian majority group.¹⁵⁰

The same anxieties as those found among many Muslims in the West are addressed here, including the loss of religious identity and concern for the religious identity of the children. The issue of assimilation is also discussed and it parallels a common fear that often arises in Muslim interfaith marriages as Islamic religious authorities often view interfaith marriages as a contributing factor to the assimilation of North American Muslims into other groups, predominantly the Christian majority group.

Moreover, a Jewish/Christian union is an intersection of belief, identity, culture, and ethnicity, constructs that Judaism and Christianity encompass differently in some cases. However, both Protestantism and Judaism view marriage as a covenant with God. Callahan writes: “To be Jewish may be to have a cultural or ethnic identity, but not necessarily religious conviction. Identification as a Jew does not require a belief in the

¹⁴⁹ Erika B. Seamon, *Interfaith Marriage in America: The Transformation of Religion and Christianity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 133.

¹⁵⁰ Marianne Husby Callahan, “Interfaith Family Process,” 1.

religious tenets of Judaism. This can be confusing for a Christian, whose understanding of religiosity emphasizes individual beliefs and participation in organized worship.”¹⁵¹ Judaism and Islam each have strong cultural components, which, for Christians, can be difficult to comprehend since Christianity is based on individual conviction and centered on participation in organized worship. It is important to note that as members of the majority group, intermarried Christians may have limited awareness of how the Christian religious tradition and American culture can at times be indistinguishable due to the Christo-normative nature of the United States.

While religion and ethnicity are intertwined in the Jewish tradition similar to the Islamic tradition, in Judaism membership is based on birth, a notion that is not similar to Islam.¹⁵² If one is born to a Jewish mother, Judaism considers that child to be Jewish. Thus, unlike Islam, which is patrilineal, Judaism is matrilineal. Another difference that exists between Judaism and Islam is the formality and complexity of the conversion process. It is difficult to become Jewish if one is not born Jewish. Proselytes must begin by convincing a rabbi that they wish to become Jewish because of their sincere interest in the religion and the Jewish community. Proof of one’s dedication to becoming a Jew must be demonstrated by frequent attendance at synagogue, engaging in Jewish rituals, and repeated attempts to convince the rabbi of their true motives.¹⁵³ This process reinforces the distinctiveness and exclusivity of being Jewish.

Christian Positions on Intermarriage

Christian marriage is seen to bring two Christians along with their families into a more intimate relationship with Christ and the church. In Catholicism, marriage is seen as

¹⁵¹ Marianne Husby Callahan, “Interfaith Family Process,” 3.

¹⁵² Erika B. Seamon, *Interfaith Marriage in America*, 100.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

a sacrament, whereas in Protestantism, it is widely understood as a covenant.¹⁵⁴ These ontological notions of Christian marriage can also contribute to a fear of exogamy within the religion.

In Christian communities in the United States, interfaith marriages were prohibited until the disestablishment of state churches in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.¹⁵⁵ There were three important and interrelated developments that occurred in the American religious landscape as a result of disestablishment and permissibility of Christian interfaith marriages. First, there was a differentiation of the religious and secular spheres and the increasing importance of the arena of civil society.¹⁵⁶ Second, there was an increase in religious diversity as no church or religious group was privileged by the state and immigration also contributed significantly to the diversity as well.¹⁵⁷ Third, there was more freedom for religious choice and personal religiosity, which contributed to American religion being transformed into a consumer marketplace.¹⁵⁸ Individuals and families were free to change their religion, denomination, or even disaffiliate from religion altogether. This American religious landscape set the grounds for the increase in intermarriages that would occur in the later century.

Furthermore, the Protestant Reformation opened the theological door to Christian religious intermarriage, although the practice remained strongly discouraged (more so in some denominations than others).¹⁵⁹ However, this was in part of the fear of exogamy:

Although different traditions within Christianity have differed in their interpretation of scripture on this matter, it is widely believed that a marriage to a

¹⁵⁴ Erika B. Seamon, *Interfaith Marriage in America*, 99.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 42

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 99.

non-Christian risks compromising the sacramental and/or covenantal nature of marriage, poses a grave danger to the Christian faith of the Christian spouse, endangers the Christian upbringing of children, and compromises the family's ability to effectively partake in Christian pilgrimage and discipleship.¹⁶⁰

This view parallels the fears of Islamic authorities regarding Muslim interfaith marriages. Additionally, there is the risk of “endangerment to the Christian upbringing of children,” a fear that also exists when considering marriages between Muslim women and non-Muslim men.

Pluralistic Empathy Due to Interfaith Dynamics

It is no surprise that interfaith couples and children contribute to shaping a society where pluralistic identities are normalized. An interesting trend that emerged within the data was the increased levels of self-awareness couples and children exhibited when considering notions of plurality. This portion of the chapter will break down the awareness of plurality that was exhibited by married interfaith couples and interfaith children that were interviewed for this research.

Plurality Among Married Interfaith Couples

Le Gall and Meintel drew upon 80 interviews with mixed couples in Quebec and discussed how parents in such unions negotiate strategies of cultural transmission and develop balanced blueprints concerning the identities of their children.¹⁶¹ This qualitative study demonstrates that interfaith families embrace cultural differences and find it enriching for themselves and society: “Our data shows that instead of one person having to take on the other's culture, and the children adopting that culture, both partners usually

¹⁶⁰ Erika B. Seamon, *Interfaith Marriage in America*, 100.

¹⁶¹ Josiane Le Gall and Deirdre Meintel, “Cultural Identity Transmission in Mixed Couples in Quebec, Canada: Normalizing Plural Identities as a Path to Social Integration,” *ANNALS-The American Academy of Political and Social Science* 662 (2015).

embrace cultural differences as enriching for themselves, their children, and the society in which they live.”¹⁶² The participants in the study expressed their desire to expose their children to the cultural richness of the world in general, not just the cultures and religious backgrounds linked to their origins. Through their words and actions, the participants within this study convey a liberal vision of human culture and religion as being comprised of a mosaic of resources rather than the traditional notion of a particular culture and religion being generationally passed on. This discourse suggests that culture and religion can be both deterritorialized and individualized by interfaith couples.

For example, participant 6 discusses how she feels about being married to a Hindu male:

I think for me, I like learning about different cultures and different religions, like when I think of my wedding ceremony I thought that it was beautiful that we had both religions represented and learning about what the symbolism of those rituals were, I think that was very important. On the downside, you know that you are not always going to be accepted by everybody and could children down the line have issues? Maybe. And I think in our society people want to label you as something, whether it's your race, religion, class, etc., I think it's a downside because it's not the easiest thing to marry out. I guess that's more a downside from a societal perspective, not from a day-to-day perspective. But I guess when you are looking at it when stepping back, how people view it and how you have to justify it to people, I think that will be a downside of a interfaith/interreligious marriage.

Participant 6's open-mindedness and desire to learn about different cultures and religions demonstrates how intermarriage can be seen as a microcosmic representation of diversity and plurality. Her discussion of societal judgment also reflects some of the possible adversities that come with exogamy due to group and societal expectations. Similarly, participant 9 also exudes high levels of open-mindedness and eagerness to learn from her partner: “I think it is always good to be in a partnership or marriage where you can have

¹⁶² Josiane Le Gall and Deirdre Meintel, “Cultural Identity Transmission,” 112.

diverse viewpoints and you can learn from each other and I think it is a good microcosm of how interreligious dialogue should work in the real world actually.”

Another pattern that emerged in the research was that participants’ families also learn about different religious views and cultures, thus further promoting their own acceptance of plurality. Faizal Kayum mentions an incident that portrays this at an interfaith wedding ceremony he conducted:

I mean a few years ago, there was a stepfather who was from the States and he didn’t want to attend the wedding because his stepson ended up getting married in a Muslim household. When the ceremony was finished he came up to me and said, I didn’t want to come but I’m so happy that I did because it’s so different. So he understood a different aspect of Islam.

Faizal Kayum’s interfaith wedding ceremony allowed for this family member to have a more unprejudiced perspective regarding intermarriage in Islam. Participant 12 described another example of the transmission of inclusivity and religious awareness to her partner’s family:

One of the good things that came out of this [her intermarriage] is the opening of our families; they are more open and are interested about learning about each other and getting to know each other. Especially on my partner’s side, he grew up in the Niagara region, small town, small community, everyone knows each other, so when word got out that he was dating a Muslim, everyone took it as an opportunity to get to know and take away the stereotypes with their interactions with me. I found them to be very opening and welcoming.

Her intermarriage was also an opportunity for her partner to learn more about Islam: “My partner’s just a curious guy, he took a lot of time earlier on to read up on the religion, on the Islamic history, he took time to read the Qur’an, so for him it was more about exploration and understanding my background and where I come from.” Participant 12 sees her marriage as breaking stereotypes and barriers that exist due to societal expectations:

To be honest it's funny because I think there's this notion that when you are marrying someone from a different religion or cultural background, there are so many more obstacles and hurdles to overcome, but for me my marriage has been so much more aligned. I actually think if I had married a Muslim man or someone who was Bengali, I think I would have had a lot more difficulty in my marriage than I do now.

As demonstrated by the data above, it was apparent that the participants' experiences with their intermarriages opened the doors for their partners, their families, their partner's families, and themselves to become more pluralistically-oriented and inclusive.

Interfaith marriages can defy society's expectations of failure because of the differences that exist between the two partners according to Dr. Khalid Sohail:

One of the fundamental issues in understanding the dynamics of the relationship is to know how the spouses see their differences. Some couples experiences the differences as a source of conflict and it creates tension while others see the differences as an asset and feel that the relationship is enriched by their different views, beliefs, and lifestyles. Those couples who are insightful and are committed to each other usually find ways to resolve their differences and turn it around for themselves.¹⁶³

Individuals who had knowledge of their partner's religion, culture, and differences were more likely to build a strong marital foundation. Multiple participants associated their partner's high knowledge of their religion and culture with acceptance. Participant 15 stated that despite her low level of religiosity and post-modern Muslimness, she appreciated how her partner was aware of and understanding towards he religion and culture: "The most important thing for me is that he never complains or he never makes fun of my religion. Even though I am not quite religious, I would be offended if someone was making fun of my religion or family, he never does that."

Non-Muslim partners can gain a more sophisticated understanding of Islamic religious and cultural ideals by being married to Muslims allowing them to breakdown

¹⁶³ Khalid Sohail, *Mixed Marriages: 21st Century Phenomenon*, 80.

stereotypes and become more accepting of Islam in general. Participant 17b provides an interesting example of this. He is an American-Jew who lives in Turkey and is married to a Turkish-Muslim woman. He works at a non-profit organization in Turkey that provides assistance to refugees, most of whom are Muslim. Also, his mother re-married to a Turkish man in the United States when he was 13, so he had grown up with Turkish and Muslim influences. He discussed how he found it interesting being the minority in Turkey and describes some adversities he faced as a result:

In America, I'm just a white guy, I mean there has been some anti-Jewish stuff going on lately, but it is nothing compared to what Muslims go through in the US. But here there is a constant reminder that Jews are not welcomed especially the more conservative community and politicians make speeches where they will reference things in comparison to Jews as if Jews are the most evil thing.

He also mentioned that within his workplace, he had to hide his Jewish identity to prevent discrimination and also because it may have been safer:

I can't tell the refugees I work with that I am Jewish. For instance, there is one big refugee centre that we go to that is run by an Australian woman and she went and made a speech in Israel and the whole community was really upset about that and then there was this rumour that the centre was actually a Zionist conspiracy and there were all of these weird rumours. Those folks tend to think that Jews and Israel are the same thing, anything they feel about Israel, they feel about Jews...I've tried to go to synagogues and Jewish cemeteries here but you need a letter proving that you are Jewish and there is crazy security. I got a menorah here too, there were Jewish areas in Istanbul, but now there are not as many left here. I saw it in an antique shop so I bought it, but whenever there are electricians or anyone is in the house we hide it.

As a result of participant 17b's upbringing, global experiences, and marriage to his Muslim partner, he is able to have a very open-minded and substantial understanding of Islam, minority populations, and political Islam:

In the US, where Muslims are often oppressed and suffer violence and discrimination, I find myself defending Islam with my American community. Turkey has increasingly become more politically Islamist, I find myself in a position where I am arguing against religion in cultural, political institution, I feel weirdly split where I am defending Islam in one place. I am not against Islam but

I am against Islamism and political Islam in the country where I live. We have a policy with my organization where we want to send kids to state schools rather than Qur'an schools, so I feel like there is a tension with my interactions with Islam here versus what they would be in the US.

Participant 17b demonstrates how as a non-Muslim married to a Muslim woman and how living as a minority within a majority, he has developed an inclusive and open-minded outlook on religious pluralism regardless of any discrimination or hardships he may have encountered.

Plurality Among Interfaith Children

When interfaith children reach adulthood, they are given the opportunity to contribute to the solution of religious intolerance in societies. In *Being Both: Embracing Two Religions in One Interfaith Family*, a mother from New York explains:

My children are in the unique position of being able to experience the joys of two sets of traditions, cultures, and teachings and ultimately will gain a greater understanding of the interrelationship between the two religions without the “tunnel vision” and intolerance, which can sometimes accompany being raised in one faith alone.¹⁶⁴

The interfaith adults within the data collected for this study also demonstrate inclusivity and open-mindedness. Interfaith individuals show elevated levels of agreeableness (the dimension that involves the more human aspects of humanity) when analyzing their personalities with the five-factor model (FFM).¹⁶⁵ Participant 7 is an example of an interfaith individual who demonstrates this higher level of inclusivity and open-mindedness:

You basically grow up with diversity in your household. Instead of having to rely on reading about something or travelling or watching something on TV, I lived it because your parents are from two different backgrounds and two different countries and both from two different religions. I thought it was kind of cool

¹⁶⁴ Susan Katz Miller, *Being Both*, 48.

¹⁶⁵ John M. Digman, “Personality Structure: Emergence of The Five-Factor Model,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 41 (1990), 422.

because it kind of opened my eyes and allowed me to see things. Think about it, Norway is one of the richest countries and then Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries and densely populated, so the complete opposite countries too, so it made me think of and realize how fortunate I am of what I have especially when I visit Bangladesh and the different aspects and issues that can arise from race and religion.

This participant attributes being globally cultured and his high appreciation of pluralism to his interfaith identity. He demonstrates that his mixed background and upbringing allowed him to be a more agreeable and altruistic individual. Participant 3, a 22 year-old interfaith individual who converted to Islam during her early adult years, stated:

I've found myself being more charitable and more giving towards people and more compassionate. I see that I can also bond with people who are from the same faith and also with people who aren't necessarily from the same faith and I am accepting of other people. I also feel that I am open-minded...I find that a lot of people forget that Islam is about inclusivity and that is super important especially with times like this because of what is happening around the world and stereotypes and there is so much stigma around coming from an Islamic background. It's kind of f***ed up.

This participant was raised Catholic and converted to Islam when she gained her own personal autonomy. As demonstrable above, she mentions that her interfaith identity has allowed her to become more understanding of others and exercise considerable empathy.

For parents, raising interfaith children can sometimes be problematic. According to Rodriguez-Garcia, raising children and transmitting values and sociocultural models to them can cause both conflict and accommodation for mixed couples.¹⁶⁶ This can be seen in participant 3's family:

There were a lot of cultural conflicts and religious conflicts just because they are two different religions and they are going to clash. But I'd probably say the biggest things was probably, I'm not even sure how to describe it but there was a lot of miscommunication and that leads to a lot of aggravation like tension in the

¹⁶⁶ Dan Rodriguez-Garcia, "Mixed Marriages and Transnational Families in The Intercultural Context: A Case Study of African-Spanish Couples in Catalonia," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 32, vol. 3 (2006).

house like there isn't a clean form of communication with people because they are a bit opposite.

Participant 3 grew up with two conservative ethnic backgrounds, Colombian and Pakistani, and two different religions, Catholicism and Islam. It is also apparent that when the religiosity of partners is not on par, the more religious partner has a stronger desire for their child to grow up with their own cultural and religious influences. Participant 3's mother was a conservative Catholic with a higher level of religiosity than her father, who identified as an Agnostic Muslim. As a result, she grew up with strong Catholic values within her childhood, but was drawn more to her father's religion later in her life. On a similar note, participant 2, an interfaith Muslim who was married to a male with a Catholic/United Christian background and pregnant with her first child, mentioned that it was very important for her to transmit her Muslim identity to her children and that she did not want Christianity "to win."

I don't know what's going to happen in the next 30 years but when they grow up I hope that they have the influence of both because I know that Islam isn't all that popular right now [*laughs*]. Growing up where they are, I am worried that Christianity is going to win. I'm worried that Christmas is going to be their favourite thing.

Here we see participant 2, an interfaith individual who grew up with a mixed identity, express concerns regarding her children growing up in the Christian majority west. The partners within a marriage who were more religious than their spouses placed a higher priority on transmitting their religious and cultural backgrounds to their children. This priority was sometimes problematic since it caused them to feel anxious about their children's future growing up as a mixed Muslim in a majority Christian society. However, at times this priority was a positive force, allowing parents to be proactive and conscious of transmitting their Muslim identity to their offspring.

Contemporary Nikaahs

This section of the chapter discusses the innovative wedding ceremonies of mixed Muslim couples and demonstrates how an interfaith wedding ceremony can be seen as representation of plurality within societies. There were a variety of types of interfaith weddings that participants discussed within the interviews; they were both informative and interesting to consider within this research.

Although several participants were able to mesh their two respective religious traditions together within their marriage ceremony, Riley mentions that this is often not the case:

We often tend to imagine interfaith weddings as having two officiants – that both the bride and groom’s traditions are represented equally, perhaps symmetrically. The *New York Times* wedding announcements do seem to mention a disproportionate number. But weddings with religious leaders from different faiths are rare: only 4 percent of interfaith (and surprisingly, 2 percent of the same-faith) couples employ them. Instead, interfaith couples are much more likely to have used a civil official (43 percent versus 31 percent for same-faith couples). In other words, interfaith couples rarely try to incorporate both religions. Rather, they compromise by picking one or neither.¹⁶⁷

Interfaith wedding ceremonies are a relatively new phenomenon and many participants within this study described the hurdles that they faced finding the appropriate religious authorities to conduct their mixed wedding ceremony. The participants discussed in this section were able to find a way to combine their traditions, identities, and histories within their wedding ceremony and did not convert happen along the way.

Erika Seamon’s research supports the notion that interfaith weddings are difficult to plan, but possible based on the data that she collected for her research on interfaith Christian marriages in the United States:

¹⁶⁷ Naomi S. Riley, *Til Faith Do Us Part*, 62.

In most cases, the couple sought balance in their two religious traditions, designing a wedding ceremony to reflect that their marriage is not singularly a Christian marriage, but a marriage that brings together two religions, two cultures, two histories, and two families. In the process, these couples decided to incorporate some but not all religious elements of their respective traditions into their weddings.¹⁶⁸

Blended interfaith wedding ceremonies were frequent within the data collected for this research and they brought forth noteworthy illustrations of diversity and inclusivity.

Muslim-Ahl al-kitab Wedding Ceremonies

In the data collected for this research, three Muslim women married *Ahl al-kitab* men in interfaith marriage ceremonies. They all discussed how they faced some hurdles along the way, but felt it was worth it to express their mixed identities within their wedding ceremony and demonstrate the plurality of their relationship.

Participant 2 described the first interfaith marriage ceremony in this research. Her wedding was officiated by the Noor Cultural Centre in Toronto, Canada, mentioned previously in this chapter. She described how the *nikaah* ceremony was important to her parents who organized the mixed ceremony for her and her partner:

Once my parents mentioned that they really did want to have a *nikkah*, they went and discovered the Noor Center themselves and they found the imams there. The imam was actually really interesting, he was actually Catholic and is a big religious scholar and he has written books and stuff and a bunch of papers. He was really nice, so my partner and I met him first, but then he left down to the US to for a teaching position somewhere, but now he's in the West. He doesn't come to the Noor Center, so when he moved then we also met Faizal. My parents were the ones who came to me with the solution, they were like we want you to have a *nikkah* and we have found a mosque that supports interfaith marriages.

The Noor Cultural Centre is an example of contemporary and progressive Muslim cultural and religious centres in Western countries that have opened the door for

¹⁶⁸ Erika B. Seamon, *Interfaith Marriage in America*, 132.

interfaith wedding ceremonies in Islam. The ceremony that participant 2 had was a small and intimate one that took place at her parents' house with her immediate family:

The *nikkah* was at my parents' house and all three of us, my sisters, were there and we had the imams travel to us. They didn't seem fussed in anyway as to where it was. I think that was important for my partner too that it wasn't at a mosque and it was more of a neutral ground and relaxed kind of thing. Faizal was wonderful and he was so nice and so was the other imam and my partner liked them both a lot so that was a positive. It was also very interesting because my partner was raised Catholic and the other imam was raised Catholic, they had a bit of a connection. The funny thing is for the imams at the Noor Center it is a bigger deal that your partner is actually religious, they find that important if you have an interfaith marriage, they support it – I wouldn't say it's a loophole – but from that perspective from Islam where they talk about "People From the Book" and they kind of recognize and respect "People From the Book." If you marry someone that is Christian or Jewish, that's where they get that common ground and they have talked about it at each of our *nikkahs* [for her other sisters as well]. That's why they are okay with it whereas both of my sisters husbands'...so my one sister's husband, his dad's Jewish and his mom is Christian, he is pretty much Atheist and doesn't like religion and my other sister's husband also doesn't like religion and is super Atheist, so for both of those we were actually worried because for the imams it would be harder for them because they don't believe in anything. So for them, they kind of skirted over that topic and tried not to focus on it too much. For ___ he was brought up in the church, so I think they were better with that.

There are two important things to note here. First, it was a common trend among some participants in this study to have their wedding ceremony in a neutral location in order to make the ceremony less intimidating for the non-Muslim partner. Second, we see here the sympathetic viewpoints of *Ahl al-kitab* in Islam. As mentioned earlier within this chapter, while there is less stigma towards Muslims marrying non-Muslims who are Jewish or Christian, the issue of the permissibility of Muslim women marrying *Ahl al-kitab* men remains. Here in participant 2's case, we are able to see an interfaith marriage occur between a Muslim woman and Catholic/United Christian man without him having to convert and without her religion being compromised.

The second interfaith wedding ceremony was between participant 21 and her Jewish partner. She wanted to have a ceremony where she could combine both Muslim and Jewish traditions harmoniously, but described obstacles that she had to face when trying to organize the religious component of her ceremony in New Jersey:

So our rabbi went to elementary school with my husband so we knew that he was our guy. We were looking for an imam who would do interfaith marriages if the groom was non-Muslim and the bride was, it was a bit more difficult, I looked at one in Queen's, NY and he said that he would do it but to get back to him within a timespan that was not a good enough time for me. Then we were recommended to see this other imam who worked at a Jewish university at some point and we had a meeting with him and he went through how he would do the ceremony and asked questions about how we wanted the wedding to be, you know just our preferences for marriage. He sounded pretty good until he wanted my husband to sign somewhat of a conversion sheet! He wasn't ready for that and I didn't want him to sign something that would solidify that at that point, so we didn't go with him. Then the third person I found was a professor I knew through undergrad. It was great, he told us about things to consider and things to put in the contract and how the ceremony would go. And I think we did 3 or 4 counselling sessions with the rabbi that discussed what was the way to go and things that were important in a Jewish marriage and stuff like that.

Although it took some time, she was able to find an imam who would do the ceremony with the rabbi, although he was from Duke University since they were unable to find anyone local. Participant 21 initially thought that the Muslim and Jewish ceremonies would be separate, but they ended up being combined which she found to be a pleasant surprise:

Participant 21: After we walked down the aisle, our imam did the intro and also introduced the rabbi and then we entered the hall. He read verses from the Qur'an and then we exchanged vows and the rabbi was helping us with the seven blessings for the Jewish ceremony. Then our imam declared us married and we broke the glass also.

Interviewer: It's interesting because other Muslim individuals I've interviewed who were married to Jewish partners were able to combine their ceremonies together, which is pretty unique. I wonder if that has to do with the similarities that exist among the two religions in comparison to Muslim-Christian and Muslim-Hindu weddings.

Participant 21: I thought we would have to do a separate ceremony, where the imam goes first and then the rabbi goes next, but then mixing them together worked out so much better.

The harmonious nature of participant 21's interfaith Muslim-Jewish wedding ceremony exhibits plurality and inclusivity and microcosmically demonstrates the possibility of positive relations between members of Abrahamic religions.

Similarly, participant 14a and participant 14b combined Muslim and Jewish traditions within their wedding ceremony. Participant 14a describes how they were able to get everything they wanted within their wedding ceremony:

We wanted to have a wedding where we did everything at the same time. We had two officiants performing our wedding, we had an imam and a rabbi. It was beautiful and we were fortunate to be able to find two people who were able to do that and work together and create a ceremony with us. It went back and forth so it had Arabic and Hebrew in it, which was really nice. *I think that was also a big thing for any of our family that may have had any kind of mixed feeling that made it better and showed them how we were going to figure it out.*

The last sentence (in italics) by participant 14a is an important point to discuss. At times, participants discussed how family members who were hesitant about interfaith marriages had their anxieties lessened when they saw the synchronization of the two religious traditions within the wedding ceremony. Within a blog post about her interfaith wedding, participant 14a states:

How do a Rabbi and an Imam plan a ceremony together? First, they discussed with us what prayers and traditions are typical for a Jewish wedding and Muslim wedding. Then, we met together to figure it out. We were honoured to have an amazing Imam and Rabbi who wrote a beautiful ceremony for us, intertwining blessings from both our religions and incorporating Hebrew, Arabic, and English. We included the Jewish tradition of breaking the glass and had a *Kiddush* cup filled with grape juice instead of wine because drinking alcohol can be viewed as *haram* in Islam. We also had *yarmulkes* available for whoever wanted to wear one for the ceremony. We made the non-traditional decision for my husband and bridal party to dance down the aisle to the upbeat song "Marry You" by Bruno Mars (who has intercultural and interfaith heritage himself) in order to get all of our guests into the celebratory spirit. I walked down the aisle with my parents to

“All of Me” by John Legend. We both love music and felt that it was the perfect way to start our unique ceremony.¹⁶⁹

Participant 14a argued that her wedding was the perfect celebration of combining her religious and cultural identity with her partner’s and how her and her partner “joked about how their wedding photos would be the perfect advertisement for world peace.”

Muslim-Hindu Wedding Ceremony

Participant 6, who married an Indian-Hindu male, described how she and her partner combined their religious traditions within their wedding ceremony when asked about how the couple embraced being in an interfaith marriage:

I think a good example would be our marriage ceremony, which was multi-component. It was important to my family that I have the Muslim ceremony and I think it was also important to me too, just starting to close that loop. So we did that and I think we would have been okay with it, to make everyone happy and that was an important decision for me. So that was the Muslim ceremony, but there was a Hindu element to it. There was a little bit of a Hindu ceremony that his mom did. He didn’t want his mom doing it because he didn’t want any religion stuff in the ceremony, but I was like, “If it’s something that’s important to her, just let her have it.” So we had that little thing, and then we had our civil ceremony, which was the legal component, so it was all three of those things...the *nikaah* was done by my uncle and he did just the actual ceremony, which didn’t need to be an imam and I didn’t want an imam there [*laughs*]. And then...cause I didn’t want the really religious sermon...the Hindu portion, it wasn’t the full Hindu ceremony, it was just some aspects of it, more so the blessings of it, and the officiant was there just to make it legal. Because neither of the Hindu portion or the Muslim portion were legal, so we wanted to have the real legal part of it finished.

It is important to take into account that combining Muslim-Hindu weddings is oftentimes a more difficult task than combining wedding ceremonies between Muslims and *Ahl al-kitab* individuals because of the monotheistic/polytheistic clashes that exist between Islam and Hinduism. Although other Muslim-Hindu couples were interviewed for this

¹⁶⁹ Rorri Geller-Mohamed, “Successful Interfaith Marriage: A Jewish and Muslim Wedding,” *On Being Both* (blog), July 1, 2017 (3:44 pm), <https://onbeingboth.wordpress.com/tag/rorri-geller-mohamed/>.

research, only one of the four Muslim-Hindu couples was able to combine their religious traditions within their wedding ceremonies.

Muslim-Hindu Marriages

As demonstrated by the Islamic religious literature and qualitative data gathered for this research, it is evident that Islam has strict requirements for marriage partners, but more so for polytheistic religions, such as Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, and especially Hinduism. Miller writes:

Celebrating a monotheistic faith such as Christianity, Islam, or Judaism alongside a mainly polytheistic faith such as Hinduism forces families to grapple with simultaneous “gods” and “God.” And people from the Dharmic faiths (Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism) must face the real or perceived exclusionary nature of Abrahamic rituals.¹⁷⁰

Specifically considering Muslim-Hindu marriages, sometimes the anxieties and intolerance for such unions can be best understood in light of the socio-political history behind the encounter of these two religions.

Participant 4, a Pakistani-Muslim married to a Hindu woman, provides an example. He describes how it was not the differences between him and his wife that initially made him question their relationship, but his family’s misconceptions of monotheistic-polytheistic relationships:

I would say that at first it was much more difficult in terms of – we always had that fear of how we were going to work because our parents were such polarizing/different religions. You know, monotheist versus polytheist, so that fear was always there to the point where we almost broke up with that fear because we worried that this relationship couldn’t go anywhere, so what was the point. Especially since college was coming to an end, that was a fear that we always had, that my parents would never accept her, how can we keep doing this?

¹⁷⁰ Susan Katz Miller, *Being Both*, 205.

Both of our views were the same on her side and on my side. We always had that fear of where this was going to go and how.

Participant 4 struggled with many hardships when he told his family about his relationship because of his wife's Hindu identity. While his friends were supportive of his engagement, his parents' reactions were far more dire:

Family was a different thing, my siblings were all very supportive [two brothers] and they never said anything negative against my partner or the marriage, but the parents were a whole different story. The parents never wanted it from the beginning, they just made it tougher and tougher, essentially their whole thing was, "You have to make her convert or this is not going to work," and that has been their thought process ever since they found out about her to about I would say the time we got married.

Participant 4's mother described people with whom she associated who refused to talk to her because her son was going to marry a Hindu:

I did have my mom tell me that a couple of her aunts and family friends, again this is my mom saying it so I don't know how true it is, she's like, "this and this person says they don't want to talk to us because I'm marrying a Hindu," and then I said [*laughs*], "Well maybe if that's the reason that somebody stops talking to you then maybe you don't need them to begin with."

This participant had to face significant backlash from his parents, relatives, and community as a result of his intermarriage. As a result, he also was unable to have a religious wedding and initially his parents refused to attend his wedding at the courthouse, although they did relent:

We just did a court marriage. We never had a religious wedding, our parents were not accepting of it, even until the day of they were not accepting of it, mainly because of my dad, my mom would take that, "I just want you to be happy, I'll accept it." But my dad was not having it. My partner's parents had come around maybe two-three weeks before we got married, but my parents had not come around even until the day of...it was maybe two weeks before we decided to set a court day. I told my parents about it and they told me that they didn't care, but the day of I called my parents and I told my dad that I wanted him to be there and to just do it for me, and he did show up and he was there and didn't make it any worse, he was accepting of it I would say, he kept his peace. We got married at a courthouse through a judge. So it was just a court marriage, 20 minutes or so, we just said the "I dos" and that was it.

Despite the disapproval of participant 4's parents, they put their differences aside and supported their son. My research found several instances where Muslim participants who were marrying Hindu individuals were given ultimatums by their parents or were pressured by parents to have their partners convert. Participant 20 is a Pakistani-Muslim woman in her forties in Paris married to a Kenyan-Hindu male. She and her husband got married when she was in her twenties; he converted for the sake of their marriage. She describes that the conversion created a lot of tension for him and he was not comfortable with it at all. She also mentions that when she was younger, it was more difficult for her to stand against societal and familial pressures when it came to her marriage and "people's expectations interfered with what they wanted to do as a couple as well." She states that as she ages, she is more able to defend herself, whereas in the past she was less confident. She also attributes this increasing strength to her ongoing thought process about her faith and beliefs.

Participant 6's experiences of intermarriage can be seen as an anomaly as she did not experience severe instances of disapproval or ultimatums from those around her. When asked about meeting her partner's extended family for the first time she said:

It was all fine [*laughs*]. I think the joke was more that I was from Pakistan and like the two countries having a bit of a rivalry, more so than the religion thing. I think they were also more used to it because in his family there have been prior interreligious and interracial marriages. So when my husband got married he had like two other siblings, one who married someone who is a different religion and race, and then his sister who married someone who was from a different religion, who was also Muslim actually, Ismaili. You know like, I think by the time they heard what my partner was doing, they had already known. In fact his family in India, no one has married anyone else besides from their type of Indian. So like it is just the three of them here who have gone out on their own, otherwise everyone else in India marries in their own area.

Participant 6's interfaith marriage ceremony is a hopeful sign that there will be further acceptance between Muslim and Hindu marriages in the future. Although there is

minimal literature available regarding Muslim-Hindu marriages in Western societies, the numbers of these marriages are increasing in the West, creating an important area of research for understanding Muslim intermarriage in Western societies.

Conclusion

The arguments presented in this chapter show that Muslim intermarriage is a microcosmic representation of pluralistic relations between Muslims and members of other religions as they interact in Western societies.

These marriages allow the non-Muslim partners of the union to gain a thorough and open-minded understanding of Islam in spite of Muslim stereotypes depicted in popular Western media. Also, as a result of these intermarriages, the families of the non-Muslim partners are able to become more aware of Muslim identities and Islamic culture and diminish their stereotypical notions of Islam.

Muslim interfaith children are able to be more progressive, inclusive, and worldly when it comes to viewing other cultures, faiths, and ethnicities. Their experiences suggest that they have a high tendency on the agreeableness scale within the Big Five Model of Personality, demonstrating high levels of empathy and altruism.

Several progressive religious authorities in multiple religions are now willing to perform an interfaith marriage, which validates the increasing number of such unions.

Although Muslim-Hindu marriages are still seen as more controversial than those between Muslims and *Ahl al-kitab*, there is still hope for the diminishment of the socio-political and prejudicial remnants between these two groups.

V

Final Discussion

This thesis has examined how Muslim interfaith marriages in the West both reflect and shape notions of gender, globalization, and religious pluralism in Western societies. Islamic religious sources and authoritative laws and rulings concerning intermarriage demonstrate a sympathetic tone towards individuals classified as *Ahl al-kitab*. However, the definition of *Ahl al-kitab* itself is subjective, along with the justifications for prohibiting intermarriage between Muslim women and non-Muslim men. Changes as a result of modern times create new socio-historical contexts that religious texts may not always take into consideration. Thus, re-evaluating definitions of *Ahl al-kitab* and bearing in mind the increased rights for women in Western society can contribute to reformation of traditional Islamic positions on intermarriage in Islam and the prohibition of Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men.

Muslims in the West are increasingly exposed to individuals of other ethnicities and religious groups within their daily lives, consequently increasing their probability of marrying out. Globalization and migratory patterns of Muslims to Western countries has been a contributory factor behind the recent rise of Muslim exogamy in the West. Frequently, Muslim adolescents struggle with finding their autonomous selves and postmodern Muslim identities. Second-generation Muslims oftentimes experience differences and conflicts with their parents due to their varied identities in comparison to their first-generation parents. These changes demonstrate a need for the development of community resources to assist young Muslims with family conflicts and managing and understanding their postmodern Muslimness.

As a result of their postmodern identities, a high proportion of second-generation Muslims living in the West do not find exogamy to be a concern, an attribute that exists due to their increased levels of awareness and open-mindedness as a result of growing up in pluralistic, Western societies. Muslim interfaith marriages in the West can be seen as a microcosm of positive pluralistic relations in contemporary times. The increased levels of acceptance, awareness, and inclusiveness among Muslim interfaith married couples can be seen as a hopeful prototype for how relations between Muslim and non-Muslim populations overall should be in the West.

The experiences of the participants in this research indicate the necessity for literature, discussion, and resources for Muslims in intermarriages. The literature that is available on Muslims in interfaith marriages in Western societies is in its infancy; there are some books published on the topic within European contexts, but limited publications from North American perspectives. Additionally, there is a demand for more literature on Muslim-Hindu marriages in the West as this is a demographic that is growing. Along with a need for literature specifically on Muslim intermarriages in the West, there is also a lack of community discussion on the topic. Consideration of gender, globalization, and pluralism is important for understanding the identities of postmodern Muslims living in the West. This lack of community discussion highlights the need for increased social supports and networks for Muslims involved in relationships with non-Muslims in the West. Several of the participants were able to find resources locally that assisted them with comprehending the complexities and issues that they may encounter as a result of being in interfaith marriages. Others were not as lucky since they lived in settings where the Muslim minority was very limited with little demand for postmodern Muslim

resources. An important resource that Muslims in the West, regardless of their setting, were able to access were interfaith groups and blogs on the Internet, which proved to be substantial support systems at times for several of the participants.

This research also brought forth the necessity for further literature on complex issues related to intermarriages. First, it is important to consider the connection between interfaith marriages and honour killings. This association emerges also as a result of generational differences regarding mate selection and dating. As mentioned by Dr. Sohail, the correlation between intermarriage and generational dating differences applies more to women since the sexuality of women is strictly regulated by males and women's sexuality is considered to be directly tied to family honour.

Second, there could be further research done on interfaith marriages in varied environments. For example, with the case of Muslim interfaith marriages, there could be further research done on intermarriages within refugee camps in European, North African, and Middle Eastern countries.

Third, there has also been an increase in visa interfaith marriages, which brings forth underlying sociopolitical issues that can microcosmically represent relations between two countries, ethnicities, and/or religions.

Finally, there is the phenomenon of "Love Jihad" or "Romeo Jihad," which is an alleged activity predominant in South Asia where young Muslim boys and men are said to reportedly target young girls belonging to non-Muslim communities for conversion to Islam by feigning love. Further research on this phenomenon can also be traced to underlying sociopolitical and religious tensions between Indians and individuals from other South Asian countries and Muslims and non-Muslims within South Asia. As

demonstrable above, the issues mentioned above are not exclusive to Western settings and they are also not exclusive to Islam.

However, as the religious landscapes of Western societies continue to change, the rate of intermarriage will continue to rise. As the second largest religious group globally, literature on Muslim intermarriage is expected to grow and the rate of intermarriages among Muslim women and non-Muslim women is also expected to increase. Interfaith marriage has implications not only for the married couple, but also impacts the linkages of the larger family, lineage groups, and Muslim communities as well. The consequences of intermarriage affect future generations, as well as present and past ones. An increase in relevant social services in Western societies would be beneficial for this little known, yet powerful, demographic.

Appendix A: Participant Characteristics

Participant 1: Dr. Khalid Sohail (Expert)

- Male
- Psychotherapist in Oshawa, Ontario who has counselled many interfaith couples and individuals of mixed-faith backgrounds
- From a Pakistani-Muslim background, but describes religious beliefs as Atheist and Humanist
- In a relationship with white woman

Participant 2: (Interfaith Individual/Muslim Female in Interfaith Marriage)

- Late 20s/Early 30s
- Pregnant
- From a mixed religious and ethnic background: Pakistani-Muslim dad and American, non-Muslim mom who converted to Islam after 5 years of marriage
- Married to a Catholic/United Christian man
- Raised in Oakville (predominantly white neighbourhood)
- Identifies as Muslim

Participant 3: (Interfaith Individual)

- Female
- Early 20s
- Student
- From a mixed religious and ethnic background: Pakistani-Muslim dad and Colombian-Catholic mom
- Father identifies as liberal, Agnostic, Muslim
- Mother identifies as conservative, Catholic
- Had a more Colombian/Catholic upbringing, but converted to Islam in late adolescence
- From Greater Toronto Area

Participant 4: (Muslim Male in Interfaith Marriage)

- Pakistani-Muslim
- Married to Fijian-Hindu
- Mid-30s
- 2 year-old son
- From northern California
- Conservative Muslim parents
- Parents from both his side and his partner's side did not approve of marriage
- Him and his partner were in long-term relationship throughout college
- Raised in Pakistan, grew up in U.S.

Participant 5: (Muslim Male in Interfaith Marriage)

- Pakistani-Muslim
- Early-30s
- Married to American-Christian woman
- Born in Pakistan (was very young when he lived there), raised in U.S.
- From northern California
- Conservative Muslim parents
- Wife is not religious, but parents are content with marriage because she is from an Abrahamic background

Participant 6: (Muslim Female in Interfaith Marriage)

- Mid to late-30s
- Pakistani-Muslim
- Married to Indian-Hindu
- Grew up in liberal Muslim family where mom was more religious
- Has a higher level of religiosity than partner
- Identifies as spiritual Muslim

- From Greater Toronto Area

Participant 7: (Interfaith Individual)

- Male
- Half Norwegian-Lutheran and half Bengali-Muslim background
- Identifies as cultural Muslim
- Grew up in Oakville, Ontario
- From Greater Toronto Area
- Has a young daughter
- Married to Pakistani-Muslim

Participant 8: (Convert Muslim Female in Interfaith Marriage)

- Irish-Christian converted to Islam
- Mid-20s
- Married to Indian-Muslim husband
- From Glasgow, United Kingdom, husband lives in India (was on student visa when they met)
- Identified more as an Atheist prior to conversion
- Had wedding in India
- Some discontent from parents due to husband's visa situation

Participant 9: (Muslim Female in Interfaith Marriage)

- Pakistani-Muslim
- Married to Agnostic/Atheist-Canadian
- From the Greater Toronto Area
- Has a 2 year-old son
- Culturally Muslim
- Husband converted to Islam, but is not practicing

Participant 10: (Interfaith Individual/Muslim Female in Interfaith Marriage)

- Early 30s
- Born in Pakistan, came to Canada when she was 13
- From a mixed ethnic background: Egyptian-German mom and Iraqi dad
- Parents met in university when in Ottawa, father was a relief worker so they travelled a lot
- Parents divorced few years after her family returned to Canada
- Mother was very religious; participant's upbringing was in a Wahhabi household
- She was homeschooled and was not allowed to have interactions outside of her household when she was growing up
- Married a Canadian, non-Muslim man
- Has a young son
- From Greater Toronto Area

Participant 11: (Muslim Male in Interfaith Marriage)

- Late 20s/early 30s
- Married to Indian-Hindu wife
- Grew up in practicing Muslim household
- His family is more religious than his partner's
- Married at Ismaili Centre in Toronto
- From Greater Toronto Area

Participant 12: (Muslim Female in Interfaith Marriage)

- Bengali-Muslim
- Culturally observant Muslim
- Protestant husband
- Partner's parents are churchgoers

- Has younger children
- From the Greater Toronto Area

Participant 13: (Muslim Female in Interfaith Marriage)

- Early/mid-30s
- 2 children – ages 2 and 5
- Previously divorced, remarried current partner
- White, British husband
- Partner raised in a strong Anglican family, where members of the family were missionaries (i.e. mother-in-law)
- Husband initially identified as Atheist, but marriage has shifted him from Agnostic to non-practicing cultural Muslim
- Raised in strongly devout Sunni family from Hyderabad, India (family migrated to Karachi)
- Parents immigrated to Canada in 60s/70s, still traditional
- Raised in family with 3 children, she was the middle one and first girl
- Parents were more lenient/liberal with her older and she had to fight for them to treat her equally
- Husband converted for marriage
- From Greater Toronto Area

Participant 14a: (Jewish Female in Interfaith Marriage)

- Raised Jewish, identifies as cultural Jew
- From Queen's, New York
- Late 20s/early 30s
- Grew up in Long Island, which is more Jewish/Christian
- Has an adopted Christian brother
- Has a private practice where she works with interfaith couples
- Son – 1 and a half years old

- Married to participant 14b

Participant 14b: (Muslim Male in Interfaith Marriage)

- Late 20s/early 30s
- Guyanese-Muslim
- Grew up in observant Muslim household
- From Queen's, New York
- Married to participant 14a

Participant 15: (Muslim Female in Interfaith Marriage)

- From southern Spain
- Early 30s
- Indonesian-Muslim
- Lived in Australia for first bit of life because father did his master's degree there
- Grew up in democratic Muslim family in Indonesia
- Lived alone since high school
- Got married in Indonesia
- Married to Spanish-Catholic partner

Participant 16a: (Muslim Female Engaged to be in Interfaith Marriage)

- Met in university
- Lebanese-Muslim
- Early 20s
- Had moderately Muslim upbringing
- Relationship with her partner made her closer to Islam
- Engaged early 2017, getting married September 2017
- Intend to have Islamic marriage ceremony

- Married to participant 16b
- From Waterloo, Ontario

Participant 16b: (Catholic/Convert Muslim Male Engaged to be in Interfaith Marriage)

- Mid 20s
- Met participant 16a's family in early 2013
- Converted to Islam (not for marriage, but for himself)
- Raised Catholic, but more of a cultural, spiritual Catholic
- Non-institutionalized Catholic, parents were god-fearing but did not regularly go to church
- From Waterloo, Ontario

Participant 17a: (Muslim Female in Interfaith Marriage)

- Late-20s
- From Turkey
- Student
- Daughter of liberal, Turkish, Muslim parents
- Married to participant 17b

Participant 17b: (Jewish Male in Interfaith Marriage)

- Late-20s
- From Turkey
- Grew up in Florida, Jewish community, went to Jewish school growing up
- Parents were not religious, culturally Jewish
- Mother remarried Turkish male
- Grew up with Turkish family
- Has been in Turkey for the last 3 years

- Works for humanitarian organization
- Married to participant 17a

Participant 18: (Muslim Female in Interfaith Marriage)

- Mid-30s
- Family is from Hyderabad, India and parents immigrated to Canada in 70s but divorced when she was in her early teens
- Met her husband in law school through friends
- They have been together for 8 years
- Cultural Muslim
- French-Canadian, Christian husband
- Husband grew up going to Catholic school
- From Greater Toronto Area

Participant 19: Faizal Kayum (Expert)

- Interfaith Muslim wedding officiant (*kazi*) at Noor Cultural Centre in Toronto
- Has performed marriages between Muslim women to non-Muslim men (including other participants)
- Does pre-marital counselling with wife for interfaith couples

Participant 20: (Muslim Female in Interfaith Marriage)

- Early 50s
- Pakistani-Muslim background
- Kenyan-Hindu husband
- From Paris, France
- Sister also had interfaith marriage in Europe
- Daughter (early adolescent) raised Muslim
- Husband converted for marriage

Participant 21: (Muslim Female in Interfaith Marriage)

- Lives in Boston, originally from New Jersey
- First-generation Afghani
- Muslim background, didn't go to mosque but took courses in university
- Progressive Muslim parents
- Russian-Turkish, Jewish husband who identifies as Agnostic, cultural Jew (did Birthright)
- Keeps halal house, prays when travelling

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Muslim Interfaith Couples

1. Tell me briefly about the history of your relationship
2. Tell me briefly about your personal religious beliefs and religious upbringing. What are some religious/spiritual activities that you participate in regularly? How religious are you now in comparison to before you were in the relationship with your partner?
3. How were your differences first viewed by you? By your partner?
4. How do you currently embrace the differences of being in an interfaith marriage?
5. How did family and friends respond when you announced your engagement?
6. Did anyone in your friends circle or extended family respond negatively or try to dissuade you from marrying? If yes, how did you respond?
7. Were you asked questions by friends and family regarding how you intended to raise your children? If yes, how did you respond?
8. How do your friends and family currently view your marriage?
9. Did you and your partner discuss how you intended to raise your children prior to getting married? Or before you decided to have children (if applicable)? If yes, what did you decide or discuss?
10. Did you consult with an imam before marrying? Did you consult with another religious authority (respective to the partner) before marrying?
11. Who married you? Were there any complications or unexpected problems with the wedding ceremony?
12. Do you and your children (if applicable) participate in religious activities/holidays of your partner?
13. Do your partner and your children (if applicable) participate in your religious activities/holidays?
14. Have you decided that your children will follow a particular religion, religion(s), or no religion?
15. What factors have influenced you to raise your children in a specific faith, multi-faith, or non-religious familial environment? Are there any specific incidents or life events that have influenced how you are raising your children?
16. What benefits/disadvantages have you seen your child experience as a result of being brought up in an interfaith family?
17. What benefits/disadvantages have you experienced being in an interfaith marriage?
18. Have there been any other interfaith marriages in your extended family? If yes, what has been the response to those marriages?
19. Do both your family and your partner's family get along?
20. Do you have any advice for other Muslims in interfaith families or those considering entering into an interfaith marriage?

Appendix C: Interview Questions for Mixed Muslim Individuals

1. Tell me briefly about yourself.
2. What does religion mean to you?
3. Are you religious? If so, how would you describe your religious affiliation/spirituality?
4. What are the religious and cultural backgrounds of your parents?
5. Talk to me a little bit about your upbringing being brought up in an interfaith household. Discuss how both your parents' spirituality had an influence on you early on in your childhood and adolescence.
6. Did you feel like that there was a difference regarding religiosity (levels of religiousness) among your parents and did this have an impact on your upbringing?
7. What religious activities did you participate in within your household growing up?
8. What religious activities do you participate in currently?
9. How did your ideas regarding religion in general change and shift (or not change and shift) from your childhood in comparison to the present?
10. If you are married, describe the religious orientation of your wedding ceremony (if possible).
11. If you are married, what is the religious identity of your partner?
12. If you are married, how was your interfaith identity first perceived by your partner?
13. If you do have children (or wish to have children), how would you prefer their religious upbringing to be?
14. How important would it be to you to have your children have a similar religious upbringing as you?
15. What benefits/disadvantages have you experienced as a result of being brought up in an interfaith household?
16. What factors have had an effect on your religious affiliation or religiosity? (i.e. personal experiences, external social groups, spiritual experiences, etc.)
17. Do you have any siblings? (Don't have to use names) If so, how have their religious affiliation been similar or different than yours?
18. What benefits/disadvantages have you experienced as a result of your interfaith identity?
19. How do you currently embrace the differences of being an interfaith individual?
20. Do you have any advice for interfaith individuals managing their identity with regards to their marital and familial life (or just in general)?

Appendix D: Interview Questions for Psychotherapist

1. Tell me briefly about the work that you do.
2. What types of issues do you deal with within your clinic? Particularly ones with couples and families?
3. Having a Muslim identity and being a psychotherapist, what kind of issues do you predominantly see within Muslim marriages and families?
4. With regard to interfaith couples that you may have had in the past, what kind of issues did you see reoccurring within these types of marital and familial dynamics?
5. Talk to me a bit about how humanism plays a role within your work, life, and psychotherapeutic methodology.
6. You have a documentary and a book on mixed marriages, I was wondering what inspired you to pursue further research into the topic and how this research has assisted in the work that you do presently?
7. What are your thoughts on the gender bias and differences that exist with regard to Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men?
8. What do you think the future holds for interfaith children and families?
9. As a psychotherapist, what are some issues and concerns that you have seen interfaith children encounter and go through? What about interfaith families?
10. What advice would you give an interfaith couple considering marriage?
11. What would you say regarding the religiosity of individuals involved in interfaith marriages? Do you see a power dynamic and skew with regard to gender and religion in a marriage and family?
12. In your personal opinion, to what degree can social and cultural anxieties within Muslim communities pertaining to pluralism, gender roles, and the effects of globalization be directly related to the controversies surrounding marriages between Muslim women and non-Muslim men in particular?
13. What do you think is a major reason behind the prohibition/grey-area with regard to Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men?
14. Based on your experiences, what are generalizable differences in experiences between a marriage between a Muslim man and a non-Muslim woman when compared to a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man?
15. Have you noticed a difference with regard to “controversy” within extended families when a Muslim man marries out versus when a Muslim woman marries out?
16. How are extended families impacted by mixed marriages?
17. How does the identity of interfaith children impact their faith development and overall development?
18. How do the social experiences of Muslim women who have married out differ from the experiences of Muslim men who have married out?
19. Due to the recent Islamophobia exhibited within the western world, what issues do you think may arise in Muslim interfaith relationships, marriages, and families?

Appendix E: Interview Questions for Muslim Interfaith Wedding Officiant

1. Tell me briefly about yourself.
2. Have you performed marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims? What would you say is the quantitative difference of Muslim women versus Muslim men marrying non-Muslims?
3. Are most of the marriages that you have performed been between Muslims and *ahl al-Kitab* or also other religions as well?
4. How does the nikah and/or civil ceremony of an interfaith Muslim marriage differ from that of a Muslim-Muslim marriage?
5. How does the nikah and/or civil ceremony of an interfaith Muslim marriage involving a Muslim woman differ from one involving a Muslim man?
6. What are your thoughts regarding the prohibition/grey-area topic of Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men?
7. What are some *fatawa* or scholarly literature that you resonate with when holding your positive views regarding Muslim interfaith marriages?
8. Do the non-Muslims in interfaith Muslim marriages usually convert during the wedding ceremony or prior to?
9. What demographics do you usually see with regard to nationality and ethnicity when it comes to the interfaith marriages that you have performed?
10. How long have you been performing interfaith marriages? Have you noticed an increase/decrease in the number of interfaith marriages that you have been performing over the time that you have been doing this?
11. Have you ever faced criticism and judgment because of your open-mindedness towards interfaith marriages and your work?
12. In your personal opinion, to what degree can social and cultural anxieties within Muslim communities pertaining to pluralism, gender roles, and the effects of globalization be directly related to the controversies surrounding marriages between Muslim women and non-Muslim men in particular?
13. Have you noticed a difference with regard to “controversy” within extended families when a Muslim man marries out versus when a Muslim woman marries out?
14. How are extended families impacted by mixed marriages?
15. Have you ever performed a marriage between an interfaith Muslim individual and a Muslim or non-Muslim?
16. How do the social experiences of Muslim women who have married out differ from the experiences of Muslim men who have married out?
17. What do you think are some contributing factors to the rise in interfaith marriages?
18. What insecurities do couples have prior to getting married?
19. Due to the recent Islamophobia exhibited within the western world, what issues do you think may arise in Muslim interfaith relationships, marriages, and families?

Bibliography

- Abou El Fadl, Khaled. "Fatwa by Dr. Abou El Fadl: On Christian Men Marrying Muslim Women." *Scholar of the House*. Last modified May 2016. <https://www.searchforbeauty.org/2016/05/01/on-christian-men-marrying-muslim-women-updated/>.
- Ahmed, Qanta. "Islam, Interfaith Marriage Go Hand in Hand," *USA Today*, February 12, 2012.
- Aini, Noryamin. "Inter-Religious Marriage from Socio-Historical Islamic Perspectives," *BYU Law Review* 2008, no. 3 (2008): 669-705.
- Akec, John. "Sudan's Turabi – Muslim Women Can Marry Christian or Jew." *Sudan Tribune*. Last modified April 2006. http://www.sudantribune.com/article.php3?id_article=15021.
- Al-Yousuf, Heather. "Negotiating Faith and Identity in Muslim-Christian Marriages in Britain," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 17, no. 3 (2006): 317-329.
- Ali, Yusuf Abdullah. *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*. Beltsville: Amana Publications, 1997.
- An-Naim, Abdullahi. *Inter-Religious Marriages Among Muslims: Negotiating Religious and Social Identity in Family and Community*. New Delhi: Global Media Publications, 2005.
- Armstrong, Karen. *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1994.
- Aswad, Barbara & Barbara Bilge. *Family and Gender Among American Muslims: Issues Facing Middle Eastern Immigrants and Their Descendants*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996.
- Aviv, Caryn & David Shneer. *New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora*. New York: New York University Press, 2005.
- Axinn, William G. & Arland Thornton. "The Influence of Parental Resources on the Timing of The Transition to Marriage," *Social Science Research* 21 (1992): 261-285.
- Barlas, Asma. "*Believing Women*" in *Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.
- Benavides, Gustavo. "Modernity," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor, 186-205. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.

- Blecher, Arthur. *The New American Judaism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Callahan, Marianne H. “Interfaith Family Process and The Negotiation of Identity and Difference.” PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 2001.
- Cila, Jordan & Richard N. Lalonde. “Personal Openness Toward Interfaith Dating and Marriage Among Muslim Young Adults: The Role of Religiosity, Cultural Identity, and Family Connectedness,” *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 17, no. 357 (2014): 357-370.
- Curtis, Vest S. & Sarah Stewart, eds. *Birth of the Persian Empire: The Idea of Iran Vol. 1*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1995.
- Digman, John M. “Personality Structure: Emergence of The Five-Factor Model,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 41 (1990): 417:440.
- Esposito, John L. *Women in Muslim Family Law*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1982.
- Fiorenza, Francis S. & Gordon D. Kaufman. “God,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor, 136-160. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Fisher, Mary P. *Women in Religion*. Toronto: Pearson Longman, 2007.
- Fishman, Shammai. “*Fiqh al-Aqalliyat*: A Legal Theory for Muslim Minorities,” *Research on Monographs in the Muslim World* 1, no. 2 (2006): 1-18.
- Friedmann, Yohanan. *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Giddens, Anthony. *The Transformations of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. Cambridge: Polity Publications, 1992.
- Hackett, Conrad & Brian J. Grim. *The Global Religious Landscape: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World’s Major Religious Groups as of 2010*. Washington: Pew Research Centre, 2012.
- Haqqani, Shehnaz. “Gendered Expectations, Personal Choice, and Social Compatibility in Western Muslim Marriages.” Master’s Thesis, The University of Austin at Texas, 2013.

- Hassan, Sharifah Z. "Women, Divorce and Islam in Kedah," *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 1, no. 2 (1986): 183-198.
- Hidayatullah, Aysha A. *Feminist Edges of the Qur'an*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Islam, Zahidul. "Interfaith Marriage in Islam and Present Situation," *Global Journal of Politics and Law Research* 2, no. 1 (2014): 36-47.
- Kulczycki, Andrzej & Arun Peter Lobo. "Patterns, Determinants, and Implications of Intermarriage Among Arab Americans," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64, no.1 (2002): 202-210.
- Le Gall, Josiane & Deirdre Meintel. "Cultural Identity Transmission in Mixed Couples in Quebec, Canada: Normalizing Plural Identities as a Path to Social Integration," *ANNALS-The American Academy of Political and Social Science* 662 (2005): 112-129.
- Leeman, Alex B. "Interfaith Marriage in Islam: An Examination of the Legal Theory Behind the Traditional and Reformist Positions," *Indiana Law Journal* 83, no. 743 (2009): 743-771.
- Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Masuzawa, Tomoko. "Culture," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor, 70-93. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Miller, Susan Katz. *Being Both: Embracing Two Religions in One Interfaith Family*. Boston: Beacon Press Books, 2013.
- Mohammed, Khaleel. "Imam Khaleel Mohammed's Defense of Inter-Faith Marriage." *IrshadManji.com*. Last modified April 2012. https://freethinkingstokie.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/eng_bothpages.pdf
- Mohammed, Khaleel. "Sex, Sexuality and Family in the Qur'an," in *Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an*, edited by Andrew Rippin, 298-308. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Muhibbu-Din, M.A. "Ahl al-Kitab and Religious Minorities in the Islamic State: Historical Context and Contemporary Challenges," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 20, no. 1 (2000): 111-127.
- Parray, Tauseef A. "The Legal Methodology of "Fiqh al-Aqalliyyat" and its Critics: An Analytical Study," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 32, no. 1 (2012): 88-107.

- Qutb, Sayyid. *In the Shade of the Qur'an Vol. 1*. Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1999.
- Qutb, Sayyid. *In the Shade of the Qur'an Vol. 4*. Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1999.
- Qutb, Sayyid. *In the Shade of the Qur'an Vol. 16*. Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1999.
- Redfield, Robert. *The Little Community and Peasant Society and Culture*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Reinders, Heinz. "Contexts of Interethnic Friendships in Adolescence," *Journal of Educational Science* 7, no. 1 (2004): 121-145.
- Riley, Naomi S. *'Til Faith Do Us Part: How Interfaith Marriage is Transforming America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Rodriguez-Garcia, Dan. "Mixed Marriages and Transnational Families in The Intercultural Context: A Case Study of African-Spanish Couples in Catalonia," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 32, vol. 3 (2006): 403-433.
- Rorri Geller-Mohamed. "Successful Interfaith Marriage: A Jewish and Muslim Wedding," *On Being Both* (blog), July 1, 2017 (3:44 pm), <https://onbeingboth.wordpress.com/tag/orri-geller-mohamed/>.
- Roy, Olivier. *Globalized Islam: The Search For a New Ummah*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Sallie, Abdurraghiem. *Kitab-un-Nikah: The Book on Muslim Marriage*. New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 2001.
- Seamon, Erika B. *Interfaith Marriage in America: The Transformation of Religion and Christianity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Skreslet, Paula Y. "Basic Primary Sources in Islamic Religion," *Theological Librarianship* 1, no. 1 (2008): 49-53.
- Smith, William C. *The Meaning and End of Religion*. New York: Fortress Press, 1991.
- Sohail, Khalid. *Mixed Marriages: 21st Century Phenomenon*. Lahore: Pakistan Books and Literary Sounds.
- Speelman, Gé. *Keeping Faith: Muslim-Christian Couples and Interreligious Dialogue*. Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Meinema, 2001.
- Sweeny, Jon M. & Michal Woll. *Mixed-Up Love: Relationships, Family, and Religious Identity in the 21st Century*. New York: Jericho Books, 2013.

Wadud, Amina. *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text From a Woman's Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Vyran, Kevin et al. "Identity," in *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism*, edited by Larry T. Reynolds & Nancy J. Herman-Kinney. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2003.

Zanaty, Anwer M. *Glossary of Islamic Terms*. N.P.: IslamKotob, 2006.