Muslim Childhoods in South Africa: Gendering the Madrasah Space

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Abstract

My thesis explores the spatialities and gendered pedagogies of Muslim childhoods within the context of selected South African madrasahs (places for religious instruction). The main question that guides my research study is how is the madrasah space gendered? Beginning with the assumption that madrasah spaces are gendered, my research seeks to understand Muslim childhoods and gender as a relational and materially contingent social phenomenon. I engage my research question with theoretical lenses developed by critical posthumanist and feminist educational thinkers focusing on the concepts of diffraction, entanglement and intra-action. These theoretical and analytical tools provide a lens for thinking about childhoods, gender and childhood pedagogies as ontologically relational. Diffraction attends to the multiplicity of interdependencies and ecological networks that constitute and shape interactions between subjects and objects. In this ontological-epistemological framework, the material, discursive and affective factors of social phenomena are seen as entangled and co-emergent encounters. My diffractive analysis is a place-attuned, relational reading of childhood ontologies, it focuses on the intra-actions between humans and more-than-humans, nature-culture, organic-inorganic, and maps patterns of material-discursive-affective entanglements. Using data co-generated from fieldwork observational studies conducted at four madrasah sites in the Western Cape, I diffractively analyse the spatialities and gendered pedagogies of Muslim childhoods. I map how historical-geographical-political-social-pedagogical factors intra-act and participate in the gendering of space. My diffractive reading on Muslim childhood spatialities, in the final analysis, offers a lens for thinking about gendered ontologies in ways that are non-linear, co-emergent and relational. This place-based perspective on madrasah pedagogies contributes to a broader conversation on religious geographies within a post-anthropocene context of environmental precarity, socio-economic inequalities and spatial disparities in South Africa.

Declaration

I, Nafisa Patel (student no: PTLNAF002) hereby declare that the work on which this thesis is based is my original work (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this or any other university. I authorise the University to reproduce for the purpose of research either the whole or any portion of the contents in any manner whatsoever.
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- Arabic terms have been transliterated using the UNESCO international standard, except if used differently in a direct quotation. Afrikaans words and Malayu-Afrikaans-Arabic terms are referenced as per localised usage. A full list of translated terms are tabled in the Glossary.
- All historical dates are referenced using the Gregorian calendar and CE (Common Era) dating convention.
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Date: 10 May 2021 **Signed:** Signed by candidate

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List of Abbreviations

ANT	Actor Network Theory
ASIDI	Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative
BBBEE	Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment
CMRM	Claremont Main Road Masjid
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSE	Curriculum of Sexual Education
MJC	Muslim Judicial Council
MYM	Muslim Youth Movement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
SAMNET	South African Muslim Network
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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Chapter One

Introduction:
Sacred Geographies, Networks of Religious Affinities and Chains of Barakah

There was too much in the moment of 1994 to be ignored…
the South African Muslim community had to develop an institutional memory[1]

(Fig1)

On April 2, 1994 a fortnight before South Africa's inaugural democratic elections, approximately hundred-thousand Muslims, dressed in white, gathered on the streets of Cape Town for a commemorative parade to celebrate 300 years of Islam in South Africa. The event coincided with the anniversary of the arrival of Shaykh Yusuf of Macassar, an eminent Sufi scholar and one of the key progenitors of the South African Muslim community exiled to the Cape in 1694 as a political prisoner of Dutch colonialists. The tricentenary of Islam commemorations included events such as a "Cape Muslim culture" museum exhibition (Ward: 1995), a book publication archiving the history of Islam and Muslims in the Cape (Da Costa and Davids: 2005), the minting of a tricentenary - Shaykh Yusuf commemorative coin (Haron: 2003) and a special congregational prayer held on the lawns of the Castle of Good Hope, a

[1] South African historian and chairman of the "Tricentenary of Islam in South Africa" commemoration committee Dr Achmat Davids, as quoted in an article by Shafiq Morton, uploaded on 31 March 2014 https://www.vocfm.co.za/remembering-the-tricentenary-20-years-on/ (accessed 19 October 2018). Photograph (figure 1) of the Tricentenary of Islam in South Africa march, Muir Street, Cape Town on 2 April 1994 by photo-journalist Shafiq Morton, image used with permission http://surfingbehindthewall.blogspot.com/2014/04/ (accessed 5 February 2021).

military-base site in the city centre where many of the early enslaved Muslims of the Cape were incarcerated. A particularly emblematic gesture to mark the occasion was the choreographing of a "Chain of Barakah" (chain of blessings) sequence. This involved exhibiting a special copy the Qur'an carried in a glass casing through the roads of the city and transporting it from the Awwal Masjid (the first Muslim prayer and madrasah space in South Africa established in 1794) to the *karamat* (tomb site) of Shaykh Yusuf on the outskirts of the city. The "Chain of Barakah" enactment included making a few meandering stops on its symbolic journey at various *masājid* (pl. places of prayer) and *madāris* (pl. places of religious learning) around Cape Town. At each of these sacred mooring stations, verses from the travelling Qur'an were read as a means of drawing communal blessings, and as a way of charting a new post-apartheid chapter for the Muslims of South Africa.

Although the public spectacle and performativity of this event in scripting a particular past-present-future narrative of Islam and Muslims in South Africa has since been critically discussed by a number of scholars (Ward: 1995; Tayob: 1999; Jeppie: 2001; Haron: 2003; Baderoon: 2004; Machado: 2020), I cast a retrospective gaze on the "Chain of Barakah" enactment, in particular, as a preamble to introducing the topic of my research study. Machado (2020:150) describes the tricentenary event as a mapping of "sacred geographies" where "networks of religious affinities" are constituted across time, oceans, and where memories and heritages of the sacred are affectively enscripted onto people, personalities, texts, acts, objects, places and spaces including the built and natural environments.

The 1994 mapping of religious presence onto the historical landscape of South Africa, and the marking of Muslim space, place and visibility captures an important moment of shifting trajectories in the history of Islam and Muslims in South Africa (herein after SA). For one, it signalled a Muslim community grappling with questions about democratic citizenship and religious identity post-apartheid outside of the racialized categories imposed upon them (Davids: 2012; Adhikari:2013; Baderoon: 2014). The historical moment also invited reflexive conversations about SA Muslim's spiritual and intellectual heritage and their cultural contributions to the construction of a "rainbow nation" (Dangor: 1997; Baker: 2009; Jappie: 2011), it facilitated spaces for more engaged political expression and participation and for re-thinking the community's institutional footprint as part of a democratic civil society (Bangstad: 2004; Fataar: 2007a, 2019). The masjid-madrasah space, as one of the formative Muslim

communal organising sites and an abiding institute of Muslim children's religious learning and praxis – therefore featured prominently as part of the "Chain of Barakah" procession.

Madrasah spaces provide an integral link for intergenerational transmission of religious knowledge, they help maintain the religious vitality of the Muslim community, provide a means of continuity and links to tradition and are considered important socializing spaces where young Muslim children learn about Islam and learn how to be Muslims.[2] As such, including *madāris* in the "Chain of Barakah" was considered an apt Muslim response to a historical moment that reflected the elated national mood of 1994. This mood was amplified by a confidence in the futurity of "Mandela's children" - the post-apartheid generation of born-free South Africans, who together with "resilient social networks of mutuality" (Carton, 2002: 210) would render childhoods in SA a beacon of prosperity and flourishing supported by a set of progressive constitutional privileges.[3] Muslim childhoods in SA, post 1994, have therefore been constituted within a context of wide-ranging political discussions on rights related to religious freedoms, language and cultural expression, access to basic health, education and care, protection against racial, ethnic, gender and sexual discrimination, rights to dignity and bodily integrity.

Madrasah spaces, although independent of state regulation are nonetheless bound by these broader constitutional provisions, which means that their teaching-learning orientations are located between two epistemological foundations (secular/liberal and religious/traditional) that often need to be filtered, adapted and negotiated in creative ways. A number of studies have attended to this nexus offering salient insights about post-apartheid Islamic education more broadly and Muslim schools and *madāris* particularly. For example, Waghid (2011) noted that *madāris* in SA operate along a spectrum between minimalist (where the curriculum and pedagogical methods are dogmatic and lack creativity) and maximalist (where critical rationality is prioritised over blind conformance) approaches. He argued that post-apartheid Muslims needed to adopt a non-bifurcationist understanding to madrasah education, or what he refers to as a cosmopolitanism approach to democratic education, in order to adapt and

[2] The Arabic term *madrasah* refers to places of Islamic higher learning and the term *maktab* pl. *kuttāb* refers to places for early and elementary Islamic education. In South Africa however the term *madrasah/madāris* is most commonly used to refer to religious schools that many school-going aged Muslim children attend either after normal schooling hours during the late afternoons or during weekends.

[3] Section 28 of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of South Africa, together with the amended Children's Act 38 of 2005 provide the main legal framework for Children's rights and responsibilities, applicable to any person under the age of 18 years old.

contribute positively as citizens of a diverse society. Taking up a similar position, Davids (2012, 2019) also considers the broader aims of Islamic education to be commensurable with the ideals of cosmopolitanism, she argued that post-apartheid madrasah spaces as part of the democratic pluralist educational landscape should ideally be spaces for the sharing of commonalities and respect for differences. She further suggests that Muslim children should be socialised into a *fiqh al-Muwatana* (praxis of citizenship) or a mode of "active citizenry and peaceful co-existence with all others" (2019: 55). Ebrahim (2017) on the other hand, considers children's Islamic learning spaces as preserving the distinctiveness of Muslims which in a democratic society also challenges the dominance of western educational norms. McDonald (2013) similarly sees the madrasah space and post-apartheid Islamic educational practices within the public sphere as an expression of a post-secular citizenship. For the most part, the extant body of work about post-apartheid *madāris* in SA have focused on this relational nexus between secular-Islamic or democratic-Islamic education, religious identities and citizenship.

After more than twenty-five years since the 1994 historic moment that prompted the "Chain of Barakah" it is considered timely to re-think framings about the madrasah beyond the lenses of democratic citizenship. Ongoing concerns about environmental precarity, deepening socio-economic inequalities and gendered vulnerabilities to sexual and other forms of violence are issues intimately related to children's lives. Furthermore, prevailing spatial injustices, declining confidence in government resources and institutional structures, wide-scale malfeasance and corporate greed, the persistent influence of media and technology and other post-anthropocene impacts upon the geographies and livelihoods of communities living in the global south - are pervasive realities of South African childhood ontological worlds.

These factors render salient the need for thinking differently about the geographical-environmental-spatial scalars of *madāris* in SA and to consider its place and pedagogies within a broader ecological conversation. Attending to these concerns, my research thesis focuses on the spatialities of Muslim childhoods and contemporary *madāris* in South Africa from a historical-geographical-social-pedagogical perspective. By co-relating childhood geographies, religious and gendered pedagogies, anthropogenic processes, differential economics, racialized politics, past-present histories as co-emergent entangled social phenomena, my thesis offers a place-attuned, gender focused analysis of the ontologies of Muslim childhoods and *madāris* in South Africa.

1.1. Research Question, Motivation and Objectives

Using data co-generated from observational studies conducted during 2018 at various madrasah sites in the Western Cape, the the main question that guides my research study is *how is the madrasah space gendered?* Beginning with the assumption that madrasah spaces *are* gendered, my research aims are premised on understanding Muslim childhoods and gender as a relational and materially contingent social phenomenon. Contemporary madrasah spaces are imbricated within the wider educational concerns of gender, environmental and social justice issues in SA. In a highly volatile, deeply unequal, often violent and socially fractured context of the Western Cape, the interrelated issues of economic and educational disparities, coupled with childhood vulnerabilities to sexual and other forms of abuse, ongoing cycles of poverty, drug wars, gang violence and environmental precarity – the spatialities of Muslim childhoods are especially salient to any study about *madāris* or gender in SA. In the face of these lived realities, understandings of, and approaches to childhood gendered pedagogies including the roles and functioning of the madrasah space are rendered particularly complex. Therefore, attending to questions of gender within this socio-spatial context is a fraught enterprise requiring a researcher to hold together and consider multiple contending issues.

Research conducted by the Children's Institute[4] have indicated that over half of South Africa's children experience some form of violence in their early developing years. Despite legislation, constitutional protections and other early childhood educative interventions, studies have shown that such mechanisms are often limited in their effectiveness in preventing ongoing cycles of violence, in particular sexual and other forms of gender based violence within families and communities. Spatial inequalities, gendered vulnerabilities to violence, and environmental precarity are complexly interrelated. The need for more cooperative engagements between government, advocacy groups and religious/cultural structures has been identified as one of the key intervention strategies for addressing some of the persisting gender, spatial and other social inequalities that continues to define South African childhood experiences post-apartheid (Bhana:2013; Mathews *et al*: 2016; Hall *et al*:2018; Weber and Bowers DuToit:2018).

However, current research also suggests that certain childhoods in South Africa, such as children that attend informal or unregulated educational structures and/or confessional places

[4] The Children's Institute based at the University of Cape Town is involved in collaborative research, advocacy and policy projects related to childhoods in SA. Their research findings are published annually in the "South African Child Gauge" and focuses on issues of poverty, inequality, education, violence, health and other related matters.

of care such as *madāris* (Ebrahim, 2017:51) are often rendered invisible or are excluded from official view or mainstream discourses since they mostly operate under the radar of national and international monitors for childhood risks and vulnerabilities (Mathews *et al*: 2016; Delany *et al*: 2016).[5] Currently, there are few studies that have interrogated the ways that minority religious groups such as the South African Muslim community, may be contributing to developing and sustaining unhealthy gendered attitudes, or alternatively, how they might possibly be providing validating and nurturing spaces that can positively enhance children's repertoires of gendered learning experiences. My research therefore reflects on this invisibility and offers a critical analysis of Muslim childhood gendered pedagogies within the madrasah space.

1.2. Structuring and Organizing the thesis

This thesis is arranged around six chapters. This introductory chapter provides the context for my study, and states the main question around which the rest of the thesis is organised. In this chapter I also briefly sketch out some historical details about Muslims and Islam in SA as a backdrop to help locate the broader geographical footprint and epistemological foundations of *madāris* in South Africa. Chapter Two maps out the theoretical contours that guides my analytical lenses and directs my methods of inquiry. In this chapter I introduce the concept of *diffraction* which is centrally threaded throughout the thesis. This methodological mapping is key to explaining my "ways of noticing" since the analytical tools I use to observe, think about and document my research findings are directly tied to how I position myself in relation to my research field. To be clear, my study does not seek to represent Muslim children's subjectivities, it does not analyse children's voices or their personal gendered experiences, rather children feature only in their encounters with the spatialities of the madrasah sites I observed. In Chapter Three the concepts *childhoods* and *gender pedagogies* are mapped out using the notion of "entanglement" as a heuristic tool for reviewing interrelated sets of literature on childhoods and the study of childhoods. Chapter Four expands upon and clarifies the theoretical insights I draw on and the methodologies I applied in co-generating the data used in this thesis. The main analytical component of the thesis is presented in Chapter Five. This chapter is organised around four sub-headings representing the four madrasah sites where I conducted my observational study. These are presented non-sequentially and analysed separately. In diffractively analysing these madrasah spaces, I use the theme of *roads* and *walls*

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[5] Findings from a broader research study on South African childhoods conducted in 2016 by the Children's Institute www.ci.org.za/InvisibleExcludedChildhoods (accessed 16 August 2017).

as way of "storying" my observational encounters with the spatialities at each site. Storying allows me to hold multiple considerations about Muslim childhoods and madrasah spaces in conversation whilst also keeping my analytical lenses closely focused on the gendered aspects of these place-attuned stories. Each of the four segments are further divided by a sub-section where I draw out salient "provocations" or further discussion points about childhood gendered pedagogies. Chapter Six concludes the thesis by offering a broader reflection about my spatial and gendered encounters with Muslim childhoods and *madāris* in SA.

1.3. Historical Backdrop: Muslims, Islam and *madāris* in South Africa

The first Muslims arrived in the Cape colony in 1658 from various ports along the Dutch colonial trade routes in East Africa, East Indies, South and South East Asia. Muslims were brought to the Cape either as political exiles, prisoners, or as soldiers to support the Dutch colonialist army or as serfs and enslaved labour. The early Muslim community included a sizeable number of indigenous people that converted to Islam (Baderoon, 2019:39). A second wave of Muslims arrived in 1860 to the country's eastern shores of Natal - an annexation of the British colonies, from the southern ports of India as part of an indentured labour force to work in the sugar plantations on the eastern coast. This was followed by a third group of emancipated Swahili Muslim slaves shipped to Natal from the East African port of Zanzibar in 1870s (Vahed:2014). Other groups of Muslims referred to as passenger Indians arrived in Natal during mid 1870s from various northern regions of India. Unlike indentured Indian labourers, these passenger groups were mainly traders who came freely to South Africa seeking mercantile opportunities (Vahed, 2001: 305-307). Given the disparities in circumstances and places of origins, the Muslim community in SA was internally differentiated across various class and ethnic lines as well as along regional differences in dialects, customs and theological orientations.

When Muslims were transposed to colonial-ruled SA it was not merely a displacement of human bodies but also their encompassing worldviews, practices and ways of being (Gebauer, 2019:2). Much of the historical literature maps how colonial circumstances of enslavement, indentured labour and trade incentives inscribed particularised ways Islam was practiced and preserved in that historical context. In this genre of historical works, *madāris* are often featured as one of the primary sites for not only the teaching-learning about Islam but also as key spaces for Muslim community-building. From the historiographic literature on early Islamic educational praxis in the Cape including hagiographies of eminent Sufi teachers, it is clear that

the pervasiveness of *tasawwuf* (Islamic mysticism), both in thought and practice, provided an enduring source of inspiration and influence for the nascent enslaved and socially marginalized faith community (Da Costa & Davids: 2005; Waghid:2011). Many of these early Sufi pedagogical practices persist to this day and provide the religious environments within which many Muslim children are socialized.

Historically, madrasah praxis in the Cape draw on the methodologies and teachings of the early Islamic forebears of the Cape, such as Shaykh Yusuf of Macassar (d.1699) who was exiled to the Cape as a Dutch political dissident. As a revered spiritual leader, Islamic scholar and social activist, the methodologies introduced by Shaykh Yusuf were responsive to the enslaved conditions of the nascent Muslim community and were aimed at numerically strengthening the faith community through proselytizing efforts among the indigenous pastoralist community. His pedagogical approach was rooted in *tasawwuf* practices that served an important psychological and practical function of offering transcendental dignity to a community steeped in materially undignified and oppressive circumstances (Da Costa and Davids, 2005: 23). A more formalised approach to madrasah as an alternative pedagogical space (to the available schooling opportunities offered by Christian missionaries) for children of the enslaved Muslims and other colonial subjects was established in 1793 by Shaykh ‘Abdullah ibn Qadi ‘Abdus Salam (d. 1807), reverentially referred to as the *Tuan Guru* or esteemed master (Rafudeen: 2005; Shell: 2006). Whilst incarcerated on Robben Island, also as a Dutch political dissident, he wrote a 613 page compendium on Islamic doctrinal and ritual teachings called *Ma’rifah al-Islam wa Iman* in a hybrid phonological mix of Malay and Arabic. This work provided the main textual reference and authoritative resource for teaching-learning Islam in Cape *madāris.* The underlying philosophy of the text, according to Rafudeen (2006:93-95), was seen as liberating for the enslaved Muslims. It provided them with a subtle (and passive) means of defiance against colonial dominance, where the “superior” knowledge of a “true” reality gained through the text provided adherents with a sense of spiritual power and created a mind-set of being under-awed by colonialist notions of superiority (ibid). This core text formulated the main theological basis upon which madrasah teaching-learning occurred, typically through *koples* method, rote-learning in a mnemonic rhythmic chants in Arabic-Afrikaans, which also served as lingua franca of the Cape Muslim community.

Muslim childhoods in the Cape have historically been the site for much ceremonial forms of Islamic praxis. These include practices such as the *doepmal* (naming ceremony for the birth of

a child where the new-born is decoratively adorned in a christening-like dress and carried around in a tray with flowers); *tamat* (children that complete reading/ memorising the Qur'an dress up and in an entourage of children parade through the streets with the text to the masjid to be tested by an *imām* for competency, the successful student often receives congratulatory gifts called a *slawat*); *rampies sny* (the cutting of fragrant lemon leaves that are colourfully wrapped by women in the community and distributed to masjid congregants during the commemoration of the *mawlid* – birthday of the prophet); *kersopstiek* (lighting candles in homes and the masjid on the twenty-seventh night of Ramadan), *azeemat* (talismanic amulets used for warding off evil-eye or as a healing salve for spiritual and medical illness) *gadat* (liturgies offered on a Thursday evening in homes or masjid). These ceremonial practices incorporate many syncretic cultural expressions that are peculiar to the early Cape context (Dangor, 1997: 141-144; Jeppie, 1996: 141-142; Da Costa and Davids, 2005: 47; Shell, 2006:103). In addition to this, much of the socialization of Muslim children into a Muslim faith ethic occurs through communal ritual practices such as the *janazah* (funeral and burial rituals), *nikah* and *walimah* (marriage ceremony), *ḥajj* (greeting and sending off those undertaking the ritual pilgrimage to Makkah), *dhikr, salawāt riwāyāt* (communal prayers, salutations and poems recited melodically); *ratiep* or *khalifah* (spiritual or trans-state movements performed by piercing body with sharp objects) and visitation to *karamāt* (holy shrines) to seek intercessionary blessings from pious forebears (Dangor, 1997: 144; Da Costa and Davids, 2005: 47; Jappie, 2011: 377; Waghid, 2011:70).These practices have historically provided the spiritual ambiance that set the tone for how Muslim children in the Cape have traditionally learnt to be and become Muslim, both within and outside madrasah spaces.

In Natal, the diasporic Indian Muslim community used their migrant circumstances as a form of counter reform to the colonial politics of their homeland (Green: 2008).The class differences between the trader and indentured Muslims is noted to have formed along two distinct patterns of religious practice. For example, the Islam of Muslims from rural regions on the Indian sub-continent emphasised "belief in miracles and powers of saints and *pirs* [spiritual guides], and worship at shrines" (Vahed, 2001: 312) and one of the main instruments through which Islam was propagated amongst the indentured and working class was through the teachings of pious men believed to have deep spiritual intercessory connections. These pious forebears established communities of care or *khanqahs* that comprised of orphanages, community feeding schemes as well as *madāris*. The annual *Muharram* (Islamic new-year) and *Mawlid* street celebrations provided indentured Muslims with an opportunity to publicly express their Muslim identities

and religious customs. The Islam of the trader class was characterised by efforts made to protect their business interests and maintain homeland networks, they are noted to have parochially organised their prayer and madrasah spaces around the class, language and customs of the Indian villages they came from (Vahed, 2001:309). Wealthy trader Muslims invested resources in mapping Muslim presence across the South African landscape, a notable example is the Grey Street masjid in Durban established in 1881 which remains one of the largest in the southern hemisphere (ibid:314). These traders also contributed significantly towards institutionalising particularized forms of religious practice, by establishing numerous *madāris* and using madrasah teachers trained at seminaries in India, also by codifying Islamic learning through adopting a formulaic madrasah curricula that was taught uniformly in all the areas Muslim traders settled in. This institutionalization of *madāris* through a network of trader fealty ensured a continuous educative connection to their homelands (Tayob: 1995; Sayed: 2011; Moosa: 2015).

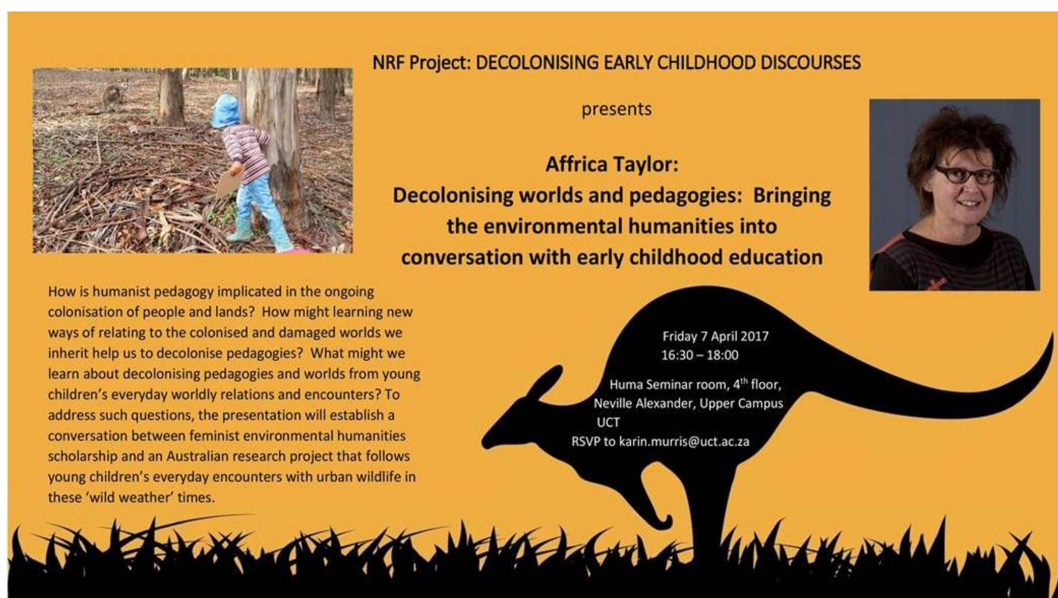
This brief historical sketch of Muslims, Islam and *madāris* helps map out some of the differences in geographical location, socio-economic conditions, ethnic disparities, and theological orientations of the South African Muslim community. This diversity and social stratification is key to understanding the complex ways gender is co-constituted within the particularized histories, geographies and spatialities of Muslim childhoods.

In the following chapter I discuss the theoretical insights and methodological approach that frames my research study.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Lenses and Diffractive Approach: Ontological-Epistemological-Ethical Framings

My theoretical framework draws inspiration from conversations and insights that emerged from a series of colloquia on *Decolonizing Early Childhood Discourses*, a research project hosted by the Department of Education at the University of Cape Town. Motivated by the premise of "decolonizing" childhood pedagogies and curious to explore what that intellectual process entailed, particularly from a Religious Studies perspective, I attended several of the talks held during 2017 and 2018. The first of which was presented by Affrica Taylor, a leading academic in the field of early childhood education, below (figure 2) is the poster for the talk that piqued my interest.



(*Fig 2)*

Ambivalently I perused the readings upon which the presentation was based (Taylor: 2017) and observed, uneasily, as a novice to the education department and its decolonizing project, the unfolding of a childhood pedagogical discourse framed around a posthumanist epistemology that is anchored in a radical de-centering of the human and asserts a non-binary co-constituting nature-culture view. Unable to precisely, at the time, locate my sense of unease, except to note that I considered it curious (and somewhat offensive) that I was one of the only two other persons of colour present, and was especially uneasy with and alert to the fact that a conversation about decolonization was being engaged by a group of mostly middle-age white

female scholars and teachers.[6] Subsequent presentations I attended however did include a few black speakers and discussed issues related to North American Indigenous-Black Childhoods (Nxumalo: 2016-2020), and racialized spatial displacements as part the South African apartheid apparatus (Dawood & Motala, 2015; Motala:2018). Yet the racial balance of participants, from my own limited experience, remained mostly demographically under-represented by Black/African South Africans.[7] This was especially notable given the parallel decolonizing education discourses of the "Rhodes Must Fall" movement that was unfolding simultaneously at the same campus, wherein race-based marginalities was, and continues to be, a central construct of Decoloniality debates in SA.

The intellectual influences and ontological premises underlying the Decolonizing Childhood Discourses project relate to Posthumanist and/or New Materiality theories, in particular, the ideas of scholars such as Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway, Karen Malone, and the works of Karin Murris, the *Decolonizing Early Childhood Discourses* project coordinator. Each of these theorists (Barad, 2003, 2007; Bozalek and Zembylas, 2016; Braidotti, 2013, 2018; Coole and Frost, 2010; Haraway, 2004, 2015, 2016; Malone, 2018; Murris 2017, 2018) in related ways advance an ontology and epistemology of non-duality between nature/culture and recognizes the intrinsic agential capacities of the human, the more-than-human/ animate and inanimate/ organic and inorganic matter. [8]

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[6] In mentioning my personal experience within this space, I am not asserting that the project held a racial bias, particularly since my participation was limited to only a few occasions that were open to the public. Thus outside of this "open" space the dynamic may or may not be very differently configured. Importantly, my reception within this space, despite my unfamiliarity with and scepticism towards posthuman epistemologies, was one of warm friendliness and welcoming engagement. In addition to expanding my own disciplinary frames of references, and diffracting my research compass, my interactions, or intra-actions in that space provided an especially meaningful learning experience. However for reasons that will be fully explicated in the following chapters, the relevance of stating my observations, internal dialogue and sense of unease at first blush is to lend context to my analytical approach and methodological choices.

[7] In her presentation at the *Pedagogies on a Damaged Planet* conference held at the Department of Education, UCT as part of the *Decolonizing Childhoods Discourses* project on 21-23 September 2018, entitled "Situating Indigenous, Black and Black-Indigenous Childhoods in the Anthropocene", US-based Dr Fikile Nxumalo problematized the foci of some of the current research output in this field, in particular, the types of racial assumptions and elisions of Blackness that are often left un-interrogated. The following section therefore interrogates these assertions in more detail.

[8] I use the terms Posthumanist and New Materialist with the qualification "and/or" throughout this paper for expediency rather than accuracy, since they are often used interchangeably in the literature. Included in this description is a wide range of related approaches which may or may not necessarily be defined as posthuman and/or new materialist specifically, such as "neo-pragmatism" and feminist materialism" (Kuby, 2017:1); "compostist" (Haraway ,2015:161); and "agential realist" (Barad: 2003, 2007). Sundberg (2014: 34) uses the term 'posthumanism' to refer to a diverse body of work generated from Anglo-European political philosophy where humans, nature and animals are regarded as a collective rather than autonomous or separate. Related theories include Bruno Latour's ANT (Actor Network Theory), although not framed as a posthumanist ANT is a material semiotic theory that accounts for entangled networks of human and non-human actants. Latour's ideas are widely

Much of my initial unease was owing to the fact that this particular epistemological framework clearly fell out of my own disciplinary comfort zone, coupled with my anxiety that the notion of "decolonizing" was being operationalized in ways that were, to me, very different and unsettling from its emancipatory and human-centred overtones. Nevertheless, my own thinking about Muslim childhood gendered pedagogies through an eco-justice and feminist faith ethic suggested a possible congruency for (co)thinking my research questions since it provided apposite descriptive and analytical tools for grappling with my data in ways that would allow me to theorize some of the complexities of the human-material dynamic. This was an especially important consideration given the deeply politicized spatial histories of my fieldwork research sites and the significant ways that matter shaped and informed my own research experiences within these spaces. One of the key analytical lenses used in the *Decolonizing Early Childhood Discourses* project to help capture the human-matter dynamic and explain its complexities is the notion of "Diffraction". Based on an understanding that sees both humans and nonhumans as entangled, active agents in the world, Kuby (2017: 4) notes that there is "a need to explore what this 'entanglement' looks like in education". Similarly enthused, I draw on the paradigm of "Diffraction", detailed hereunder, as a way to help me theoretically unfold multi entangled layers of the metaphysical, social, and political that is at the same time enmeshed in, with and through the materialities and spatialities of Muslim childhoods in South Africa.

By way of this lengthy account of my experiences of the *Decolonizing Early Childhood Discourses* project, I wish to render salient the parameters of careful choices I made in drawing inspiration from and using *some* of the theoretical insights, analytical tools and methods that posthumanism opens up for my study. In mapping related theoretical contours that inform my research, I firstly outline the basic premises of "Diffraction" theory and explain its Posthumanist and/or New Materiality epistemological underpinnings. Secondly, I engage some of the critiques and tensions that an ontological nature-culture framework raises for faith-based feminist and/or other social-justice academic sentiments; and thirdly explore the rich repository of Islamic scholarship for insights on nature-human dynamics. In this chapter, I point out the aspects of diffractive theory that I find to be particularly useful for thinking about Muslim childhood gendered pedagogies within the madrasah space, and aspects that prompts a

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cited by posthumanist and/or new materialist scholars. French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari's theory of *Assemblages* and *Rhizomes* are also influential works that posthumanist scholars draw on to explain social complexities through the lenses of fluidity, exchangeability, and multiple functionalities. My reference to Posthumanism and/or New Materialism therefore includes these strands whilst acknowledging the variances between these approaches and frameworks.

cautionary pause. Coalescing these considerations by way of theoretical rapprochement, I hope to explicate the multi-lens analytical approach through which I creatively thread the concept of "Diffraction" in relation to my research project.

2.1. Diffraction, Intra-active Entanglements and Agential Realism

The conceptual trajectory of the term "diffraction" from its disciplinary domain of quantum physics to the social sciences is commonly attributed to the ideas of Donna Haraway (2004)[9] which were further developed by Karen Barad in their[10] 2007 influential text *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning.* Barad (2007: 24-25) explains diffraction theory as a method of "bringing social and political theories to bear in reassessing how we understand social phenomena, including the material practices through which we divide the world into categories of social and natural". Diffraction, according to Barad, provides theoretical tools to move conversations within science studies, feminist studies and other similar interdisciplinary social studies beyond the mere acknowledgement that "material" and "discursive" or nature and culture factors play a role in knowledge production. Diffractive tools are intended to examine and theorize precisely how these factors work together and are co-constituted and it offers an interdisciplinary lens accommodating the mutual involvement of materiality, social practice, nature and discourse.

Barad's theory is inspired by the ideas of Danish physicist-philosopher and 1922 Nobel Prize winner for Physics, Niehls Bohr (d.1962). Barad notes that their interest in Bohr's work is not only for its larger philosophical implications but to also draw out the specifics of a consistent "Bohrian framework" and make explicit implicit ontological dimensions of his account (Barad, 2007:31). Therefore Barad's 2007 *Meeting the Universe Halfway* to a large extent deals with complex quantum theories and scientific field debates, which they skilfully thread through poststructuralist, feminist and posthumanist philosophies.[11] The density and complexity of this

[9] Haraway (2004) introduced the notion of diffraction in a chapter entitled *The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others* as a lens for rethinking social relationality within "artifactual" nature, i.e.: nature that is co-constructed among humans and non-humans. Haraway describes diffraction as an optical tool used for considering relations of "difference" among people, among humans, other organism and machines. She notes "D [d]iffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction. A diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the *effects* of difference appear" (ibid: 70).

[10] Barad uses the pronouns *they/them*, I have followed this except when referenced differently in an original source.

[11] Physicist Werner Heisenberg together with Bohr developed the theory of quantum physics in 1925 and formulated the fundamental "uncertainty principle", which is known as the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics. This theorem holds that at an atomic level a physical phenomenon expresses itself differently depending on the experimental setup used to observe it. Bohr generalized this as a theory of complementarity, a

pivotal text is due to its rigorous engagement with not only the philosophy of science studies but also the methodological intricacies of quantum physics and its bearing on understandings of human-matter relationalities.

Diffractive thinking can be described as a way of refining prevailing poststructuralist and/or feminist positions on the discourse-knowledge-power dynamic, in particular regarding the gendered discursive constitution of human subjects, as propounded by theorists such as Foucault and Butler.[12] Although both Foucault and Butler are attentive to the ways that "regulatory practices produces a specific materialization of bodies", whereby the body serves as a "locus of productive forces", Barad (2007: 25-27) suggests that neither of them "succeeds in bringing the discursive and the material into closer proximity". Instead they argue for a more robust theory of the materialization of bodies that takes into account how the body's materiality, that is, its anatomy, physiology and other material forces including non-human ones, "actually matter to the processes of materialization".

For example, using Barad's diffraction theory to explore the role of intimacy and vulnerability in the construction of masculine gendered subjectivities within regulated emotional spaces, Mellström (2016:3) noted how this framework opened up "ways of imagining, working, and thinking in terms of methodological specificity and conceptual precision to provide an ontological politics of vulnerability and intimacy". In this study, different forms of lust, passion, and desire were explored beyond conventional notions of desire for penetrative sex for heterosexual men. Instead, by regarding vulnerability as an ontological condition and as a form of epistemological situatedness, enabled Mellström to productively explore the nature and material specificities of these entanglements, and thus was able to conceptualize vulnerability as a particular kind of bodily and intellectual relation to the world, i.e.: not an

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physics principle that could be applied across various fields of thought. The "two slit" diffraction or interference experiment, is largely the science behind Barad's ideas. This wave particle experiment and the *probabilistic* nature of the diffracted patterns it produced held far reaching consequences for the nature of scientific observation and measurement. Quantum theory challenged the *deterministic* theories of fellow physicists Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein and prompted a decade long series of philosophical debates between these 20th century physicists.

[12] Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender as performative builds on Foucault's (1984) ideas on the genealogy of sexuality, one of the key insights they offer is the notion that human perception is always mediated by language and culture. Both theorists have critically interrogated social practices and its attendant knowledge claims. Their ideas offer a useful theoretical vocabulary for feminists that help to explain the knowledge-power dynamic in relation to notions of human agency (Frost, 2011: 73-74).

abstracted quality discursively constituted but rather as a dynamic diffractive pattern made up of multiple material agencies or intra-actions.[13]

By focusing specifically on the constitutive aspects of discursive practices "in their materiality", the diffractive theory that Barad proposes is one that considers the social, cultural, psychic, economic, natural, physical, biological, geopolitical and geological as being important to or entangled in particular processes of materialization. The notion of human and non-human entanglement is therefore central to understanding the underlying premises of diffractive thought, as it regards the agential contributions of all material forces, both the social and natural as implicated in its own historicity (Barad, 2007:28). It thus recognizes and analyses social phenomena as a co-emergent dynamism made up of multiple organic and inorganic agencies. Stated differently, social phenomena are not the product of human agencies alone, their emergence are in concert with a multitude of other agencies including the vitalities of matter.

Using the analogy of two stones being dropped into a still pool of water, where the waves caused by the dropping of each stone, spread out, overlap, and form new patterns, is a helpful way of illustrating Barad's diffractive neologism and clarifies the analytical work this theory is intended to perform. In this analogy, the coming together of two waves is called *diffraction*, and the resulting pattern of new waves is called a *diffraction pattern*, and the thing which makes the two waves come together in the first place (the dropping stones) is called the *diffraction apparatus* (Barad, 2007:76-77; Hollin *et al*, 2017:12). This configuration of diffractive theory used to understand and describe social phenomena in social sciences is however not simply a convenient metaphorical tool that scholars outside the field of quantum physics can dip into for its layered explanatory purchase, it is a methodology that is intended to enable a particular set of research outcomes.

Firstly, it provides feminist scholars with a theoretical vocabulary that can capture and explain the complexities of causal relations. That is, it helps scholars to analyse the causes and effects of social phenomena in ways that are not singular, linear or unidirectional. Instead, diffraction attends to the multiplicity of interdependencies and ecological networks that constitute and shape interactions between subjects and objects. Frost (2011: 78) notes that a shift towards

[13] Much of these ideas about the materialities of emotions such as desire and vulnerability have been discussed in various other contexts by other scholars, so Barad's ideas here are not necessarily new or ground-breaking. What Barad brings to this analysis however is a theoretical language that scientifically explains the specificity of material-discursive-affective intra-actions in ways that refigure thinking about agency and agential capacity.

thinking in terms of complex causation and interdependencies brings into focus "a form of ignorance or a limit to knowledge that challenges the aspirations towards cognitive and practical mastery over the worlds". What this means for research methodologies and any knowledge claims that may emerge therefrom is the acknowledgement that the researcher and research tools (diffractive apparatus) are part of the ecological network of whatever phenomena is being analysed. Together they form part of multiple epistemological communities that include both organic and inorganic matter and the phenomena that co-emerges (diffractive pattern) is a result of this interaction and is therefore not necessarily replicable or reducible. In other words, knowledge claims are not *found* rather they are interactively and creatively *produced* through multiple entangled agencies. Barad uses the term "agential cut" to qualify this intra-action and as a descriptive tool to acknowledge the temporal boundaries or perceptive limitations to what is presented as "known" or can be known. It is also one way of distinguishing diffractive methods from relativism or avoiding a relativist ruse that basically renders all knowledge pursuits as reductive and/or redundant.[14]

Secondly, diffractive methods are also aimed at interrogating and subverting claims of research objectivity in all academic methods, including but not limited to science studies. More specifically, it critiques how notions of reflexivity and representationalism get uncritically employed in social analysis. Barad (2007: 69) for example notes how the assumptions that underlie the epistemologies and ontologies of Newtonian physics inform representational methods. These assumptions entail a belief in representationalism as a) "the independently determinate existence of words and things"; b) the metaphysics of individualism "that the world is composed of individual entities with individually determinate boundaries and properties"; and c) the intrinsic separability of knower and known "that measurements reveal the pre-existing values of the properties of independently existing objects as separate from the measuring agencies". Representational methods, according to Barad, therefore *misrepresent*s the in/separability of observer and observed.[15]

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[14] The idea of entanglement, as Hammarström (2012: 43) notes does not mean that what is entangled cannot be differentiated, discussed, or remedied, only that the different entangled strands cannot be adequately dealt with in isolation, as if it is unrelated to the others. An intra-active understanding of entanglement also entails that the entangled strands are not understood as self-subsistent entities, but as continuously and co-constitutionally refigured in and through their mutual interdependence.

[15] Twentieth century developments into quantum physics not only challenged Newton's laws as flawed theory but superseded it in terms of its unparalleled and detailed accuracy. Barad (2007:399) argues that whilst Bohr's quantum theories and Einstein's theories offer profound challenges to Newtonian physics and its philosophical worldview, they do so in very different ways, that is, the two theories understand the nature of observation and the role of the observer very differently. Einstein presumes that observer and observed are distinct states with separately determinate boundaries and attributes, whilst Bohr's theory of indeterminacy challenges these

Relatedly, Bozalek and Zembylas (2017:8) describe reflection as an "inner mental activity in which the researcher supposedly takes a step back and reflects at a distance from the outside of the data". According to them this method is "based on the assumption of an 'I' who is different and exterior to that which is conceptualizing". It is this "slip into the subject 'I' who is separate from the world" that distinguishes reflection from diffraction. In the latter there is no researcher as independent subject, the intra-action and connections between human and non-human phenomena of the research process are foregrounded.

The concept of reflexivity on the other hand, as Gemignani (2016:1) notes, assumes that "researchers are unavoidably present and influential in the inquiry". Reflexivity according to him describes personal reflections on the influence of the researcher's identities and positions on the inquiry; analyses of the mutual relations between participants (or data) and investigators and how they affect the research; and critical considerations on assumptions, expectations, and boundaries of the researcher's specific discipline. These practices are often intended to absolve or placate academic responsibility about the material affects that the researcher and the research process has over research outcomes. Bozalek and Zembylas (2017:4) describe reflexivity as an individual's self-critical approach that questions how knowledge is generated and how power relations influence the process of knowledge production. They note the important ways that self-critical or reflexive analysis has been employed by feminists in terms of locating the role of their own subjectivities, broadly defined as situated knowledge. However, for Barad and Haraway, reflexivity starts off with preconceived assumptions of binaries rather than investigating how boundaries or binaries are produced through the methodology itself. In reflexivity, there is a researcher as an independent subject who is actually the locus of reflection, whereas in diffraction there is no such distinction as subjects and objects are always already entangled (ibid:8). For Barad (2007:380) diffraction can be used to "read both the instrument and the object through each other in a way in which the identifications of ''subject'' and ''object'' are not fixed". These subtle yet important differences in how research subjectivities are positioned and framed are therefore not merely prosaic but are considered central to the aims of diffractive methods.[16]

ontological assumptions and their epistemological implications. In other words, according to Barad, Einstein presumes the separately determinate nature of objects and observers, whilst Bohr questions this presupposition.

[16] Rekret (2018: 25-26) notes that the "central axiom upon which posthumanist methods rest is the notion that agency is not the sole property of humans but is dispersed across the widest possible range of actors". This method posits the researcher as an "apparatus without memory and history", which, according to him, also entails a "disavowal of reflection upon the historicity of its own concepts and the social conditions out of which they emerge". Rekret considers this posthumanist positioning of "epistemic innocence" to be a methodological strategy

The diffractive methodology that both Barad and Haraway are calling for is to eschew notions of being distant from or apart from the objects, subjects or the phenomena of research studies. Instead it applies what Barad refers to as "agential realism", that is an acknowledgment that the processes or apparatus that one uses to study or observe phenomena are a part of creating that phenomena. The notion of a pre-existing set of realities that can be re-presented or reflected upon is thus being challenged. Instead, by using the analogy of diffracted wave particles, the researcher, the research tools, research choices of inclusion and exclusion (i.e.: diffraction apparatus) to draw conclusions are all considered part of creating a new phenomenon. That is, a diffractive pattern always in flux, always subject to re-configuration thus dynamic in its materiality. What this methodology calls for is incorporating into our epistemologies "the possibility of an impossibility of knowing". That is to say that our research efforts should not be "indexed to the limits of perception or to the development of technology" but rather this limitation should be understood as being "intrinsic to the complexity of objects or processes itself" (Frost, 2011: 79). Haraway (2004) refers to this as a "partiality of perspective" or "productive ignorance" and considers it a useful prompt towards epistemic humility in the face of diversity. *Productive ignorance* and *epistemic innocence* however are political positionings that require further interrogation, since in certain circumstances, these can also be used as a strategy that obscures complicity, denies residual effects or avoids accountability for historical debts of our collective racialized, colonised and violent pasts.

2.2. Epistemological Underpinnings of Diffractive Theory

Posthumanist and New Materialist frameworks are closely associated as they hold many commonalities in terms of shared or similar perspectives but with differing emphases, these include a critique of dualities, engagements with matter and the more-than-human and a focus on relational ontologies (Bozalek and Zembylas, 2016:103). Diffractive methods as espoused by both Haraway and Barad are underpinned by a particular set of premises, which include on the one hand, a critique of enlightenment-derived modern and postmodern dualistic notions about nature and culture (Haraway, 2004: 67), humanist philosophies that centre on the autonomous adult self as sole source of knowledge production (Murris, 2016:274) and uncritical notions of species hierarchies and human exceptionalism. For example, Braidotti (2013:2) notes the implicit assumptions about what constitutes the basic unit of reference for

used to assuage posthumanist anxieties about the framework's own imbrication within that which it seeks to critique. In the following I interrogate some of the critiques levelled at posthumanist methods in more detail.

the knowing subject, or *human* has historically been "the image of Man as a rational animal endowed with language". This humanist core, she notes, is reflected in various idealized representations of a universal model of "Man", such as Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man.[17] According to Braidotti, this ideal of bodily perfection "doubles up as a set of mental, discursive and spiritual values" which in turn sets standards for both individuals and their cultures. This male-centred Eurocentric self-representation also implies a "dialectics of self and other". Importantly, as Braidotti notes, stemming from this dualistic logic is the notion of "difference as pejoration", and it is precisely through the organising of these assumed differences on a "hierarchical scale of decreasing worth" that this humanist subject gets to be defined.

This scale is emphatically reflected in the aggregate ways the environment, earth minerals, plant, animal, marine, human labour and other resources are being depleted and ravaged in the name of sustaining human needs and fulfilling consumerist excesses. The notion of "human" is neither universal nor neutral, rather as Braidotti (2018:5) points out, it is "a normative category that indexes access to privileges and entitlements". Thus any appeals to the "human" according to her, are always discriminatory, in that "they create structural distinctions and inequalities among different categories of humans, let alone between humans and non-humans" (ibid). In critiquing representationalism in research practices, diffractive methods are aimed at paying as much attention to what gets excluded as it does to what gets included in all forms of self-representation. The aims of diffractive theory rooted in Posthumanist and/or New Materialist thought is therefore focused on de-centering these types of underlying discriminatory assumptions and offers an alternate set of multi-lenses for how we analyse, represent and understand our collective worlds.

On the other hand, diffractive theory is also based on what is referred to in contemporary times as "New Physics" which apprises the broader implications of how certain scientific claims about matter have historically been understood, such as Newtonian laws of physics and Einstein's theories of subatomic particles.[18] In their introduction to New Materialisms, Coole

[17] Leonardo da Vinci's 1487 drawing of the Vitruvian Man depicts a male figure in two superimposed positions with his arms and legs apart and simultaneously inscribed in a circle and square. Also called the "Canon of Proportions" or "Proportions of Man" Da Vinci's anatomical drawings are presented as a cosmography of the microcosm, a theory that the workings of the human body is an analogy for the workings of the universe https://www.leonardodavinci.net/the-vitruvian-man.jsp (accessed 6 April 2019).

[18] The seventeenth century foundations of modern physics were developed by Newton, which held that the most important property of a material object is its mass. Newton's mechanical model described forces that move mass as work, and the ability to work is measured as energy. Einstein's theory of relativity subverted the idea of persistent solid matter, his theories proved that mass and energy can be converted into one another, Einstein also developed a theory of microscopic atoms which showed subatomic behaviour as constant emergence, attraction,

and Frost (2010:9-19) note that developments in New Physics has helped shed alternative light on many issues such as forces, charges, waves, virtual particles, and empty space, which suggest an ontology that is very different from the substantialist Cartesian or mechanistic Newtonian accounts of matter. Posthumanist and/or New Materialist scholars therefore not only interrogate the influence of classical science upon the foundations of modern political thought, but they are also interested in "how these new conceptions of matter might reconfigure our models of society and the political" (ibid). They further note, that current scientific developments such as nanotechnology or quantum computing already have significant material effects upon human bodies including radically altering our working or recreational environments. Within the field of Biology or the so-called Natural or Life Sciences and with the development of biotechnology, a whole host of idiosyncratic ethical considerations are constantly being raised.

Coole and Frost (2010: 15-16) mention unforeseen mutations, trajectories of illness or distress, patterns of global climate change, and the vagaries of the international economy. These are integrated issues that demand an "ecological perspective" to help better understand the interactions between socioeconomic and environmental conditions and biological and physiological or physical processes. For example, the entangled implications of former US President Donald Trump's campaign to "build a wall" as a physical barrier to stop illegal immigration into USA is noted to hold long term irreparable biological effects. A physical barrier has critical implications for not only human migration and international relations, but poses an even greater ecological disaster for the communities of people and for the habitats of multiple wildlife species. The proposed wall presents an unclimbable barricade for nonflying animal species, and without a movement passage animals cannot form new populations to spread their genes - which causes genetic inbreeding and species mutations.[19] New Materialist thinking is therefore also aimed at challenging earlier distinctions between physical and biological systems and it details how biological matter is imbricated in the social. The "New Biology" as advocated by New Materialist scholars responds to and critiques such human-centric agencies and aims to facilitate new ways of thinking about matter and its effects on a

repulsion, fluctuation, and shifting of nodes of charge (Coole and Frost, 2010: 10-11). Niehls Bohr's atomic model shows the atom as a small, positively charged nucleus surrounded by orbiting electrons.

[19] One of many studies that show the wide ranging interrelated and irreparable damage that political decisions and capitalist interests hold for multi-species flourishing https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/how-trumps-wall-would-alter-our-biological-identity-forever/ (accessed 18 May 2019).

visceral-social economy by challenging modern conceptions of moral and political agency (Coole and Frost, 2010: 15-16).[20]

The term Anthropocene is one way of describing the current era of the posthuman condition.[21] Haraway (2015:160) notes that the anthropocene is a marker of severe discontinuities, that is, what comes after will not be like what came before. Braidotti (2018: 2) defines the anthropocene as "a multi-layered posthuman predicament that includes the environmental, socio-economic, and affective and psychic dimensions of our ecologies of belonging". Differing from the humanism that underpins environmentalists or conservationists motivations of "saving the planet" or "returning to nature" in order to preserve and protect the earth's scarce resources for the benefit of humanity, posthumanist assessments of and responses to the post-anthropocene are not human-centrically motivated. Therefore the "post" in posthuman is not a teleological descriptor of humankind's current condition, nor is it a portent for the demise of human as a species - rather it is an affirmation of a multi-species co-worlding system of which humans are only a co-part of and share equally in, and non-preferentially with, all other animate and inanimate species. Stated differently, it is not "humans" that are being called upon to "save" nature for the benefit of "human species" survival, rather it is a call for humans to give up notions about being the most important inhabitants of a multi-species ecosphere.

In South Africa, the extraction and capitalization of uranium and gold have contributed to the anthropocene in significant but also in decidedly unequal ways. For example, Gabrielle Hecht

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[20] It is important to interrogate some of the latent forms of biases in modern science discourses, particularly when certain concepts are prefixed with the term "new", since implicit in its application is the notion that what counts as "new" knowledge is the assumption that its "newness" is universal. This type of posturing often serves in erasing centuries of indigenous knowledges and their ways of being and interacting with the world. Harding (2011:87) for example points out the role that women play in preserving indigenous, local or traditional forms of health practices, pharmalogical knowledges and medical treatments. Capitalist markets often appropriate and trade off on these knowledges and present them as "latest scientific discoveries" or "new technical developments". Thus what counts as scientific knowledge let alone what is posited as "new" science is often underpinned by an implicit set of biases and epistemic erasures.

[21] The term 'Anthropocene', coined in 2002 by Nobel Prize winner Paul Crutzen, is used to describe the current geological era as dominated by human action through technological mediation, consumerism and destruction of the resources of planet earth. It was officially adopted by the International Geological Congress in South Africa in August 2016 http://www.igbp.net. (accessed 7 December 2018). Noting the exacerbated rate, speed, scale, synchronicity and complexity of destruction that now includes planetary affects as well permanent effects on micro-bacteria, Haraway (2015, 2016) and others have coined several ideational terms to describe the post-Anthropocene world. For example, Haraway (2015:160) refers to a Plantationocene (wide scale agricultural misuse where the degree of change is in kind or species mutations), Capitalocene (toxic mining effects that goes beyond climate change and alters human consumption patterns), Holocene (vast genocide of people and critters, where entire species are completely wiped out) and Chthulucene (a futuristic description of biological-cultural-political technological co-merging).

(2018)[22] refers to the Witwatersrand, the region where the country's belly of gold has been mined and distributed all over the planet as a "hollow land". She notes that over time, the impact of extracting and mining ground minerals and the ecological damage of this hollowed out land on the water quality are felt by thousands of people, but its affects are felt especially and also differently by farmers, informal settlement residents, and others with no access to alternative water sources, but who need to use this compromised water for irrigation, drinking and bathing. During the windy winter months, radioactive dust from these hallowed mine dumps some with uranium residue are blown across onto farms, settlements and suburbs. For the 14 million residents of Gauteng province, she notes, mine residues form a major signature of an "African" anthropocene.

These hydrological patterns, radioactive particles, molecular compositions of the air and water as well as formal and informal economic activities are all entangled phenomena of the anthropocene, and therefore require a multi-disciplinary lens approach. The leverage of the "anthropocene" concept, according to Hecht (2018) "lies precisely in its analytic potential to bring together researchers across the natural, social and human sciences". Importantly, Hecht speaks of an "African" anthropocene as a particular nomenclature that "requires tacking between particular places and planetary perspectives". Although hers is not a posthumanist approach, she connects the historical and biophysical role of capitalism, or as she puts it "the connections between North American cars and African lungs" and the "connections between planetary and individual suffering". Naming and locating the anthropocene as Hecht does is important, because by mapping the flows and ebbs of these connections, and charting the effects of difference in these interconnected phenomena, the point is not to map a specific geographical location but the naming helps to signify the materially unequal effects and consequences of the anthropocene.

In a similar vein, Gómez-Barris (2019:2) uses the term "colonial Anthropocene" to capture the ongoing consequences of colonialism and the persisting effects of racial and extractive capitalism that has left human and nonhuman communities violently de-resourced in its wake. Grusin (2017: vii-ix) on the other hand, uses the term "Anthropocene Feminism" to highlight the fact that the concept of the anthropocene has for decades already been something implicit in feminism and queer theory. He notes that feminists have long argued that "humans are

[22] Article by Gabrielle Hecht uploaded 6 February 2018 entitled *The African Anthropocene* with the sub-heading "the anthropocene feels different depending on where you are – too often, the 'we' of the world is white and western" https://aeon.co/essays/if-we-talk-about-hurting-our-planet-who-exactly-is-the-we (accessed 18 May 2019).

dominating and destroying a feminized earth, turning it into standing reserve, capital, or natural resource to devastating ends". However this feminist genealogy, he argues, has largely been ignored or "erased by the masculine authority of an institutional scientific discourse". Therefore, the articulation of an Anthropocene Feminism is one way of both claiming and resisting how the nomenclature gets invoked in particular contexts.

The combination of fast technological advances on the one hand and the exacerbation of economic and social inequalities on the other has, according to Braidotti (2018: 3), also prompted new areas of Biopolitical scholarship. Whilst much of these engagements are aimed at shedding new light on power relations in advanced capitalism, Braidotti notes that these efforts also fail to embrace "the affirmative aspects of the posthuman turn", in that *Bios* and *Anthropos* are treated as fractured categories and the non-human elements and technological actors are not given enough prominence. Braidotti (2013:6) threads a sophisticated analysis of the techno-scientific structures of capitalism, which she claims are built on the "convergence between different and previously differentiated branches of technology". These include nanotechnology, biotechnology; information technology and cognitive science. Generally referred to in broader economic terms as the "fourth industrial revolution" [23] where globalized economic systems build upon and extend the impact of digitization in new and unanticipated ways. These biogenetic structures of contemporary capitalism she notes are especially important and central to the discussion of the posthuman condition since it involves "the human genome project, stem cell research and biotechnological intervention upon animals, seeds, cells and plants". The point she argues is that advanced capitalism both invests in and profits from the scientific and economic control and commodification of all that lives. She notes how the opportunistic political economy of biogenetic capitalism turns *Life*, that is, the human and non-human intelligent matter – into a commodity for trade and profit. [24] The types of wide-scale

[23] The first industrial revolution refers to a period when reliance on animals, human effort and biomass as a source of energy shifted to the extraction of fossil fuels from the earth's belly to use for its mechanistic powers. The second revolution occurred in the late 19th century when electricity, wired and wireless forms of communication and other forms of power generation were developed. The third industrial revolution, around the late 1950s was defined by the development of computing power and other digital systems. The fourth and current industrial revolution is noted for its cyber-physical systems, such as cryptographs and blockchain eco-spheres, where technology is not only embedded within societies but within humans themselves.

[24] For example, the popular *23andMe* https://www.23andme.com an online human genome app founded in 2006 enables people to access information about their DNA. They do this for a nominal fee by shipping a sample of their sputum to the app's laboratories and the results are made available within 2-3 days. Another apt example of profiting from information can be seen in the exponential growth of the social media app Facebook, that also owns WhatsApp, Instagram and Messenger, its fourth quarter reports in 2020 lists the app as having over 2.8 billion active users. Report by H Tankouska, 2 February 2021 https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/# (accessed 3 February 2021).

DNA collection and genetic information pooling that pharmaceutical and other corporates routinely engage in for financial gain in the name of medical science is one such example. What the neoliberal market forces are after and what they financially invest in is "the informational power of living matter itself" such as, data banks of biogenetic, neural and mediatic information about individuals, which is what counts as "true capital" today (Braidotti, 2013:6). As Braidotti notes "what constitutes capital value in our social system is the accumulation of information itself", such as DNA testing, brain fingerprinting, neural imaging, body heat detection and iris or hand recognition. Seeds, plants, animals and bacteria, she claims also "fit into this logic of insatiable consumption alongside various specimens of humanity".[25]

Therefore, in making a case for a Posthuman analytical framework, one that can account for the entangled assemblages as described above and that bring to the fore human-non-human linkages and can also help grasp complex media-technological interfaces in the context of the anthropocene, Braidotti (2018: 3-5) calls for the adoption of a critical or "nomadic posthumanities", that is, a convergence of posthumanism and post-anthropocentrism. She describes its key features as a mind-body continuum that replaces prevailing notions of human nature by a "naturecultures" continuum. In other words, it puts an end to categorical distinctions between "life as bios, and the prerogative of Anthropos, as distinct from the life of animals and non-humans". This ontological assumption of radical immanence, or the "the primacy of intelligent and self-organizing matter" implies that the posthuman knowing subject has to be understood as "a relational embodied and embedded, affective and accountable entity and not only as a transcendental consciousness". Subjectivity, according to this proposed framework, is therefore not restricted to bound individuals, but rather, as Braidotti envisions it, "a co-operative trans-species effort that takes place transversally, in-between nature/technology; male/female; black/ white; local/global; present/past – in assemblages that flow across and displace the binaries". Braidotti defines this framework as a "process of learning to think differently about ourselves, in response to the complexity of our times".

[25] A typical example of this is the conglomerate Monsanto's genetically modified agricultural seed that can resist a glyphosate based herbicide which they have patented, effectively ensuring a dominance and control over the global seed market. Their actions have had widespread irreparable damage that range from threatening traditional farming methods, affecting the livelihoods of small-scale and rural farmers, compromising nutritional value and quality of mass produced food products, developing new strains of cancers, and depleting world's water resources. https://www.organicconsumers.org/news/seeds-evil-monsanto-and-genetic-engineering (accessed 17 March 2019)

Posthumanism, in particular the critical or nomadic iteration of Braidotti's posthumanist thought is distinguished from another similar notion referred to as trans-humanism.[26] Whilst both areas of thought may share a common interest in technology or the ongoing interaction between the biological and technological realms, for scholars like Donna Haraway, technology is considered as a functional tool for the dismantling of strict dualisms and boundaries, such as the one between human and non- human animals, or biological organisms and machines, or the physical and the nonphysical realm; and ultimately, the boundary between technology and the self (Ferrando,2013:28-29). Therefore unlike transhumanism, the aim of posthuman overcoming of human primacy is not to replace this notion with other types of primacies such as machines, artificial intelligence, virtual communities and other technologies, which is a central element of transhumanist thought.[27]

As a trans-disciplinary ontological-epistemological- ethical framework for theorizing social complexities including understanding subjectivities and subject formation in a post-anthropocene context, diffractive theory provides a compelling lens for engaging my research questions on the spatialities of Muslim Childhoods and *madāris* in SA. However, in doing so I am also alert to the fact that there are certain aspects of Posthumanist and/or New Materialist thought that do not necessarily coalesce with my research aims and approach. Therefore, in the following sections, I explore some of these points of tension and chart out how I plan to navigate them by creatively adapting the basic premises of diffractive theory together with insights drawn from ancillary resources to help structure my analysis.

2.3. Critiques, Tensions and Ethical Considerations

I locate my research approach firmly within a faith-based feminist framework with a vested interest in thinking about childhood pedagogical spaces from an eco- justice perspective. My understanding of and commitment to what that justice entails, particularly in terms of how it informs my research work, is to think through my research question not only intersectionally

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[26] Transhumanism is a multidisciplinary approach that analyses the dynamic interplay between humanity and the acceleration of technology, it focuses on the impact of technological and scientific developments in the evolution of the human species from a humanistic and human-centric perspective. The Transhumanist Declaration was drafted in 1998 by a group of international scholars, it has since then been modified several times and has also been adopted in 2009 by the NGO Humanity+, one of the main online advocacy portals for transhumanist philosophies https://humanityplus.org/philosophy/transhumanist-declaration / (accessed 11 February 2019).

[27] Ali (2017) and others have noted some of the problematic ways the two frameworks do converge. Moinrul Islam (2014) for example notes that "both transhumanism and posthumanism frame *humanism* as a form of racism, but in doing so, both frameworks tend to also depreciate all other forms of racism and thus often fail to self-critically reflect and/or substantially engage issues of race". Article uploaded 4 May 2014 http://indiafuturesociety.org/posthumanism-subaltern-postcolonial-lens/ (accessed 11 February 2019).

but also by engaging meaningfully with emerging decolonial insights within Islamic Studies. My introduction to and engagements with diffractive theory stems from feminist readings on decolonizing childhoods in SA rather than any particular ideological commitment to posthumanism or from an advanced knowledge of quantum physics. Although each of these latter frameworks presented an unfamiliar field of thought processes, each has helped open up innovative possibilities for thinking through my research question and analyses in theoretically dexterous ways. At the same time, because Posthumanism is posited as an ontological-epistemological-ethical framework that essentially makes rather bold truth claims about reality and what it means to be a human, such claims and the assumptions upon which they are based need to be interrogated further. As Bruining (2013: 149) notes an ethical investment means that "to engage in any practice, to undertake any political action, we need to be guided by some prior belief…which belongs to the order of universals". Therefore in this section, I hope to clarify the types of "prior ethical investments" I hold by noting the aspects of this framework that have prompted a cautious pause and also by pointing out some of the theoretical turns I make in order to steer the discussion in a direction that is more consistent with my research aims.

The first issue considers the broader implications that Posthumanist and/or New Materialist thought might hold for contemporary feminist epistemologies. Gender, in earlier feminist discourses was generally used and understood as a social construction and was therefore rendered distinct from "sex", i.e.: that which is biologically given and which serves as a physical referent to distinguish between a male and female body (Bruining, 2013: 152). Subsequently, deconstructing the gender/sex binary and promoting the notion of gender as discursively constituted, intersectional, variably embodied and/or performative rather than biologically determined became a key argument developed by feminist scholars.[28] Gendered subjectivities has been analysed from a number of different feminist epistemic positions such as: "intersectional" (Crenshaw: 1991); "anti-racist" (Zine: 2004); "faith-centered" (Hoel and

[28] Foucault's poststructuralist theories reiterate feminist criticisms of scientific discourses of the Enlightenment and its attendant claims of rational objectivity. Foucault's framing of enlightenment discourses as a socially constructed narrative of power affirms that power is not possessed (not inherent) but is constituted through multiple, and constantly shifting sets of discourses (Francis, 1999:383). Gendered subjectivities when understood through this analytical prism are therefore considered especially useful for arguing feminist positions about gender/sex binary. Judith Butler's theory of performativity offers feminist scholars incisive tools for rethinking gender. Her ideas have challenged prevailing social constructionist ideas on subjectivity by "troubling" taken-for-granted gendered categories. (Nayak and Kehily, 2006:4). Intersectionality, as developed by Kimberlè Crenshaw is a framework for thinking about identities in a way that can account for this varying and inter-constitutive grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed (Crenshaw, 1991:1245).

Shaikh: 2013); "nego-feminism" (Nnaemeka: 2004); "cosmological" (Seedat:2016); "heteroglossia" (Francis:2010); "indigenous- African" (Chilisa and Ntseane: 2010), "spiritual" (Martin: 1993); "decolonial" (Mohanty:2013) to name just a few from this range of varying feminist approaches. For many feminists, the uncoupling of sex/gender categories is considered important not only because it disrupts the notion of an ontological subject that prefigures action (Nayak and Kehily, 2006:460) but also because it helps distil patriarchy's main scaffold, that is, the notion that biological/sex differences is an intrinsic basis for gendered discriminations and unequal social organization. Therefore, one of the main concerns about posthumanist gestures towards using biology or the material body as a referent for addressing issues of gender, race and sexual discrimination – is that it tends to subvert prevailing feminist anti-essentialist arguments and also undermines valuable political gains that gender activists have long struggled towards.

Frost (2011: 74-76) notes the implicit wariness associated with thinking about materiality and biology as "anything but discursive". She suggests that such anxieties about the dangers of determinism and claims about the possible agency of the biological "propel feminists away from biology to focus on the cultural, the linguistic or discursive formation of embodiment". For example, Foucault's claims that "bodies are constituted within the specific nexus of culture or discourse/power regimes" leads him to conclude that "there is no materiality or ontological independence of the body outside of any one of those specific regimes" (Butler, 1989: 601-602). In interrogating this claim further, Butler argued that the notion of "the body" as culturally constructed invariably suggests that "there is a body that is in some sense there, pre-given, existentially available to become the site of its own ostensible construction", which would imply that "the body is ontologically distinct from the process of construction it undergoes" (ibid). The argument Butler is making is that the assumption that the body prefigures its cultural-historical inscriptions is *also* one that is formulated within a specific discursive regime. In other words, in turning Foucault's critique on its head, Butler is still doing so within a "discursive" paradigm. Thus whilst she is attentive to the materiality of the body, she does not locate its agency outside of discourse. It is from this perspective that Barad asserts that neither Foucault nor Butler succeed in adequately bringing the discursive and material in closer proximity.[29] Barad (2003: 809) argues that "a rigorous materialist theory of

[29] Ahmed (2008: 33) refutes this reading of Butler's work as a lack of engaging materiality. She notes that Butler does in fact offer a definition of matter, i.e.: 'the effect of boundary, fixity and surface' and that for Butler, matter is an effect of a process of materialization. She further points out that Butler's definition is offered within a specific context, i.e.: responding to Foucault's claims, and that she is not offering a theory of the material world, but rather

the body cannot stop with the assertion that the body is always discursively constructed. It also needs to explain how the discursive construction of the body is related to non-discursive practices in ways that vary widely from one social formation to another". This focus on construction and/or constitution, according to Frost (2011:76), is based on "modern notions of subject-formation as an exercise in self-creation" which in turn merely serves to re-centre the human as the "definitive agent of order, meaning and action".

Two sets of claims by posthumanist scholars are being cleaved here that need to be interrogated further. Firstly the notion that feminist thought largely ignores the materiality of the body in order to maintain the sex/gender distinction - relies mainly on an (unsupported) assertion that feminism equals a compulsory anti-biological sentiment. Secondly, in de-centring the human and destabilizing the hierarchal organization of multiple species entanglements, (which is a fundamental tenet of posthumanist and/or new materialist thought) does feminism filtered through this lens loose its emancipatory social-justice basis? Does a collapsing of categories between human and the more-than-human emancipate all species equally, or does that framing assuage human guilt and divert accountability? What are the broader implications for feminist's gender equality goals?

Responding to the first claim, Ahmed (2008: 28) notes that feminist critiques of the uses of biology to defend gender hierarchy need not be read as symptomatic of anti-biologism, as critiques of biology have always been a point of divergence between feminists. She suggests that "what constitutes 'biology' has been a *question* rather than a *solution* for feminist thought" (emphasis added). Importantly, she points to the fact that feminists have produced very different kinds of critique of the role of biology, not all of which depend upon the rejection of the biological as a sphere of life. Therefore the notion of feminism equals anti-biology is according to her "a reduction of the complexity and heterogeneity of feminist work". Ahmed avers that instead of focusing on unsubstantiated claims about feminist's lack of engagement with materiality, which is a central line of argument that scaffolds much of New Materialist positions about agentic matter, it is perhaps more productive to consider "how matter matters in different ways, for different feminisms, over time" (ibid: 36).

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a theory of how sex materializes or becomes worldly. Ahmed argues, that to ask it to do so (as Barad is doing) would seem unjust. According to Ahmed this reading of Butler as anti-matter seems to be motivated mainly to authorize a new terrain for New Materialism, and therefore she questions why this terrain needs to be built upon the rejection of what preceded it in the first instance, in order to carve its path within feminist discourses?

In agreement with Ahmed's assessment of New Materialist's broad gestures about feminisms lack of adequate engagements with or erasures of matter and materiality, Bruining (2013:166) takes further issue with some of the "moralising" undertones of New Materialists positions. He notes that there is an underlying assumption of universality of the concepts that New Materialist theorists draw on such as "biology" and "nature". What he finds particularly problematic with this universalizing overture is that is tends to uncritically link and therefore also conflate these concepts with the concept of "the real". He suggests that this conflation implicitly connotes that biology/nature are in fact *more* real than, and can also be separated from language, culture and representation. These positions, he argues are presented as if they can "bring us to a more mate*real*istic understanding of our subjectivity and bodily being in this world". It is this type of moral investment that underpins New Materialism's rhetoric, which according to him can be dangerous because couched in the act of making this ontological-epistemological investment, is the postulation that New Materialism is "more realistic (and hence better) than its other/s".

An opinion that is similarly articulated by Ahmed (2008) is the fact that New Materialism seeks to build its foundations upon the insistence that its advocates must reject or dismiss other "discursive" frameworks as deficient, inadequate or lacking. But it makes this demand on rather flimsy grounds, i.e.: by relying on making vague sets of broad claims about how concepts such nature, matter, body, biology are *not* engaged by others rather than actually engaging with how such concepts *are* engaged differently.[30] The latter position will not be discrediting or diminishing of New Materialist positions, since, the underlying basis for their arguments about agentic matter is convincing without having to revert to a zero sum battle with other feminist epistemologies. Ahmed (ibid) cautions against running the risk of reifying materiality in critiquing the limitations of the discursive. As Harding (2015: 142) perceptively points out "epistemology always begins in fear that one's knowledge claims are not adequate", therefore in my opinion, these types of sweeping generalizations about feminists failures to account for materiality appears to be more an effort to assert theoretical muscle rather than a conclusive

[30] For example, in reflecting on her influential and widely cited 1986 thesis "Under Western Eyes" a critique of "Western feminist" scholarship on Third World women via the discursive colonization of Third World women's lives and struggles, Mohanty (2003:504) notes that her critique drew on Foucault's ideas to help her "outline an analysis of power/knowledge", but notes that she also drew on the works of "Anour Abdel Malek to show the directionality and *material effects* of a particular imperial power structure" (emphasis added). Mohanty's work argues for "the need for a materialist analysis that linked everyday life and local gendered contexts and ideologies to the larger, transnational political and economic structures and ideologies of capitalism".

argument against feminist understandings of the biological and the social. Hence, in attempting to clarify my use of diffractive theory, I reiterate that I do so without delving into the either pro or anti-biological discourse, as I consider them both as variant feminist registers of engagement and not as oppositional positions.

The second issue related to Posthumanist and/or New Materialist frameworks that requires further elucidation is the loci from which its claims about reality and duality are articulated. Beyond its scientifically based premises on the vitalism of matter, and it's richly textured and multi-layered explanatory value in capturing nature-material-discursive entanglements, it is imperative to also ask: what does unravelling "the ties of both genealogy and kin, and kin and species (Haraway, 2015:161); or moving "discussions about relationality from the sociological to the ontological (Murris, 2018:10); or contesting "the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real" (Barad, 2003:802); or taking "issue with human exceptionalism" (Malone, 2018;198) or practicing "modes of cosmological attention" (Taylor, 2017:68) actually mean in pragmatic and ethical terms? In other words, each of these actions indicate a movement *towards* something "new", something "different", more "inclusive" ; however what is less clearly spelt out is the *from where* , and *for whom* details.

Sundberg (2014:33-35) poignantly notes that despite offering "powerful tools to identify and critique dualist constructions of nature and culture that work to uphold Eurocentric knowledge and the colonial present", posthumanist frameworks remains within the orbit of Eurocentered epistemologies and ontologies. Posthumanist critiques uses as its main point of reference, a foundational notion of duality *as if it is universal*. The argument Sundberg is making is that posthumanism as a critical framework is responding to a particular set of assumptions about the human, and is addressing particular ontological notions of a nature /culture split, which are part of a meta-narrative rooted in Enlightenment thinking and globalized through colonial discursive practices. Posthumanist literature however continuously makes references to this dualism in universalizing ways, as if all knowledge systems share in or are based on this ontological understanding of humans, nature and culture. And even when it acknowledges or refers to "other" non-dualistic systems of knowledge, it is by way of exceptionalizing its occurrences, i.e.: a heuristic tool to help iterate posthumanist positions. Hence it is not uncommon to find references of "we" and appeals to "us" and "ours" being made in posthumanist critiques - but without necessarily specifying who the referent is or where the "we" in these appeals are actually located. According to Sundberg (ibid: 36), this silence about

its “loci of enunciation” is in fact enacting two interrelated and mutually constituting sets of silencing moves or performances. Firstly, it universalizes the assumption of ontological dualism, secondly it silences other forms of knowledge systems that are not based on dualistic thinking and have very different conceptions about human-nature-culture from enlightenment derived notions, by either othering or valorising indigenous epistemologies to confirm posthuman premises. Both moves still locate western Eurocentric knowledge as primary even when critiquing its foundations or celebrating the versatility and commensurability of the indigenous with posthumanist aims.

Responding to Sundberg’s critique that posthumanists do not acknowledge that “knowledge comes from somewhere and is therefore also bound up in power relations” Murris (2018:20) argues that such a claim is “unfounded”. She notes that “ontology and epistemology are always entangled with the ethical because the knowing subject is not at a distance from the world. S/he is always located, but not in a fixed position”. If my reading of Murris’s argument is correct, i.e.: that it is possible to be located in a specific framework and also be sensitive to and engage other perspectives or as she puts it “location does not mean the same as local” then I think her assessment of Sundberg’s critique is unfairly dismissive and fails to engage the nuances of “location” that Sundberg is referring to. For example, Murris (ibid: 12-13) points to the difficulties and also the possibilities of interpreting African philosophies into western languages. African concepts such *Ubuntu* (humanness) and *Ukuma* (relatedness to the entire cosmos) becomes part of the local posthumanist educational lexicon and are used in relation to notions of “decolonization” and “re-appropriation”. Murris however also notes the “profound tension between the Natureculture relationality claimed by African philosophers and the scholarship on child and childhood in Africa”. Whilst she is correct in noting that the concepts of *Ubuntu* and *Ukama* may be not be easily translated as being fully consistent with posthumanist aims, hence her pointing to the “profound tension” between the two; what she does not *also* note, which is equally important, is that the tension might hold a one-sided relevancy. In that, it is posthumanist scholars who need to “shift” ontological locations in order to appreciate and adopt its heuristic value; whilst those that are already immersed in and do practice *Ubuntu* and *Ukama* as part of their normative ways of being, are not trying to establish a commensurate fit to posthumanist ideals. Location and how it is claimed or denied is, as Sundberg correctly points out, very much bound in power relations. And critiques about posthumanist Eurocentric assumptions cannot be so easily dismissed as “unfounded” especially if such dismissals are only argued within and therefore mainly relevant to Eurocentric spaces

of academia. As Appadurai (2015:222) has noted "[S]some proponents of the new materialism have proved deft at sidestepping, postponing, or caricaturing these ethical or political worries" whilst others have conceded that this framework has "yet to develop a way of engaging these types of critiques". Rekret (2018:28) similarly suggests that posthumanist epistemology offers a kind of "therapy that permits both the expression of critical perspectives on contemporary technological development but contains that critique so that it need not look back to its own possibly compromised subject-position".

The one aspect that succinctly encapsulates posthumanist diffidence about its own "compromised subject-position" is its framing of "human" species as an analogous collective but without necessarily accounting for and/or being accountable to the problematic and unequal ways that humans *are* materially differentiated. Posthumanist registers of difference can sometimes translate as indifference, particularly with regards to issues of racial difference. Therefore, the third and final issue I consider is also one of the most persistent critiques of posthumanist framings, that is, its implicit racializing oeuvres that collapses the historical consciousness of all humans as if it were an experientially level category. A leading consideration herein regards how human experiences of Blackness and Black experiences of humanness are often elided within this framework and guised as an anti-racist positioning. A number of critical observations have been made in this regard.

For example, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson (2013: 671-682) cautions against Posthumanism's proclivity towards reinscribing Western exceptionalism, or adopting technological fetishism, and ableism in its "embrace of "prosthetically-enhanced futures". She notes that Black people must be humanists for the obvious reason that the dominant group can 'give up' humanism for the simple fact that *their humanity* is presumed, whereas "other communities have struggled too long for the humanistic prize". André Carrington (2017) similarly provides a piercing critique of posthumanist and new materialist "colour-blind" framings by invoking the memories of Black bodies that have been incarcerated, left to perish, rendered disposable and de-humanized as living matter. From Black flesh stowed on British slave ships regulated under the Slave Trade Act of 1788, to the fatal shooting of 18 year old Michael Brown in 2014 as well as so many other Black bodies that are routinely racially profiled and arbitrarily killed by the police force in the United States as highlighted through the hashtag and social justice movement #*Black Lives Matter* - Carrington recounts the continuities between the ways the "Black body" is debased in death and "the way it is made susceptible to debasement in its living

form".[31] His critique calls to attention the processes by which Blackness loses its *human* form and also to the historical processes that enable the human to take on the Black form. He describes posthumanists / new materialism forms of anti-racist sentiments or their "reactionary colour-blindness", "performative solidarity" and "white ignorance" as a disconnected formalism of colour-blindness whereby one "observes racial inequality in the present but ascribes its persistence to causes other than white supremacy". Carrington is drawing attention to how the collapsing of human-matter agencies assuages white guilt by acknowledging racist inequities but also affords a distancing from its reality as a collective encounter.

Iterating this line of critique, Karera (2019:44) reminds us that the ethical dimension of Braidotti's becoming-posthumanist or the nomadic posthumanist framework she envisions (as mentioned above), is one that strives for the actualization of a community-to-come. However this community is also one that rests upon an expectation that it be one that is "unrestrained by the guilt of ancestral communal violence", or the "melancholia of unpayable ontological debts." And as Karera points out, such types of posthumanist reconfigurations of subjectivity and its creative invention of a "future people" as solutions to our ecological demise, "hinge on the forgetting of the atrocious making of 'another people' by slavery and the responsibility such violent history bestows on the Western world". Therefore she importantly calls for more careful attention to be paid to the "structural conditions that facilitates and renders possible the symptomatic desire to abandon race". Heeding this call, in drawing on the diffractive theories of Karen Barad and others, I do so with an alertness to the ways that racial differences and /or assumptions of western exceptionalism and the underpinnings of whiteness can be and are often subsumed within a framework of posthuman indifference.

Some of the points of concern and tension that have been identified in this section, such as the universalizing, moralizing and silencing tendencies of posthumanist and/or new materialist frameworks, are significant and prompt a cautionary pause in terms of applying aspects of

[31] The debasement of Black form is most compellingly evidenced by Saartjie Baartman (d.1815) or Ssehura in Khoisan, who was enslaved by her colonial master and sold to an animal handler in London where her black female form was exhibited and prodded by a paying European public as a peculiarity and a specimen of primal sexuality. Sshura/ Saartjie was referred to as the Hottentot Venus for the white gaze. Even after her death, her dissected body was placed on display at a French museum and studied as a specimen of human oddity – until her remains were returned to South Africa in 2002. https://medium.com/the-establishment/the-tragic-story-of-sarah-baartman-the-enduring-objectification-of-black-bodies-b310ef20c739 (accessed 23 March 2019). Conradie (2019) similarly notes how the aesthetic of black bodies through the imagery of suffering, trauma and revolution are assimilated for consumption and display within retail, leisure and domestic spheres as part of the decorative-discursive landscapes of SA.

diffractive theory that I find especially useful for my study and that which are less so. Therefore in the following section, I map out the contours of where and how I locate myself within the broader ontological-epistemological-ethical landscape that undergirds diffractive theory and I also outline how I navigate certain nodes of tension in order to coalesce it with my own ethical investments and research objectives.

2.4. Navigating and Coalescing Diffractive Theory and Methods

In locating my research within a faith-based feminist ethic, I am also clearly marking the two sets of imperatives (i.e.: Islam and feminism) that guide and shape how I use diffractive lenses to think through and analyse my research question. For expediency, I locate both these imperatives and therefore also position my analysis within the broader field of Islamic feminist scholarship, whilst simultaneously recognizing the contested nature of that naming. Noting the important distinction that Seedat (2013: 33-34) makes between feminism as part of a "colonial civilizing practice" and feminist practice and analysis as a "state of gender consciousness", I locate my use of diffractive lenses within the latter. What this positioning means in terms of how I carefully navigate some of the points of tension that do not necessarily coalesce with the ontological-epistemological-ethical investments that undergirds diffractive theory, is that I use Islamic feminist insights, rather than posthumanism as my foundational reference point.

Feminist engagements within the Islamic tradition have created important pathways for rethinking many Islamic interpretive frameworks that have unjustly impacted upon the material, intellectual and spiritual lives and experiences of Muslims and Muslim women in particular. This approach includes a critical effort to help redress inequities of patriarchal Islamic praxis, as well as harnessing gender-positive understandings of the faith tradition. Importantly, Islamic feminist scholarship also contributes towards expanding perspectives about gender that fall outside of dominant western-secular-liberal frameworks. Methodologically, Islamic feminists engage various mutually enriching theories to develop more pragmatic and gender-sensitive methods for the study and practice of Islam. However its intellectual and existential commitments remain rooted in and reflective of a faith commitment to Islam.

Notwithstanding the obvious fecundity of analytical rigour that diffractive methods offers my study, I consider Islamic non-dualist understandings of what it means to be a human within a broader cosmological, meta-physical, social and material context to be especially enriching.

The breadth and depth of Islamic philosophical enquiry provide a treasury of resources to draw from. They offer a range of sophisticated insights that complexifies how we understand key concepts such as "reality", "materiality" and "relationality". For example, Muslim mystic scholar and philosopher Ibn al-'Arabi provides a rich analysis of the unfolding of life and matter which he explicates through the notion of the living or multiple lifeworlds as "receiving existence anew", that is a world which at first glance looks like a static and stable world but is actually in constant state of flux: at every moment, every creature is being created (Dobie: 2007: 317). Using the axiom of Real Being or *al wujūd al ḥaqq* Ibn al-'Arabi also developed a complex description of reality as being or *wujūd* - a reality that transcends all number, limits and forms. Its realization or manifestation occurs within two loci, the macrocosm and microcosm. That is *wujūd* as divine self-disclosure that never repeats itself. Each being in the universe is a unique moment of new arrival (Chittick, 2007:5-7). These understandings have provided the inspiration and basis for various erudite contemporary engagements including understandings of gender and sexuality (Shaikh: 2012). Islamic scientific debates about nature, being, matter, cosmos, microbiology and meta-physics reveal deep levels of thought and reflection on the complex nature of reality. For example, Islamic scholar Mulla Sadra's philosophy of trans-substantial motion, where he explores the temporal creation of the material world. According to this principle "all existents in the world of nature are essentially transformable, and changeable, and all their parts are continually in the process of creation and extinction" (Akbarian 2007: 73). Additionally, contemporary Islamic scholars have also been engaging in critical debates related to Muslim ethics and biotechnology (Moosa: 2012; Mattson: 2018), they offer thoughtful analysis and insights on multi-species ecospheres and "common care" strategies (Özdemir: 2015; Tlili: 2018; Gade: 2019) as well environmental ethics and eco-justice educative practice (Nasr: 2003; Mohamed: 2012).

In drawing on these understandings of non-duality as related to readings of monotheism in Islamic thought, I am also rendering salient the fact that posthumanist thought does not necessarily provide the only tools for thinking about human-matter dynamic or understanding childhoods and childhood gendered spaces as part of a posthuman condition, just that it does so in a useful manner that is more conversant with or responsive to western academic demands. By creatively threading the basic premises of diffractive theory through the lenses of Islamic feminist insights, I am acknowledging (rather than silencing) non-dualist knowledge systems that exist outside of posthumanist discourses. I am also highlighting the important ways that such systems not only inform understandings of our collective worlds that include the cosmos,

the human, the more-than-human and the materialities of childhoods, but they also help shape the ethical ways of being and acting in the world for many people, including myself.

Furthermore, by reading diffractive theory through an Islamic feminist framework, I am not only emphasising and reconciling it to my prior ethical investments but I am also navigating through some of the anxieties that exist within Religious Studies more generally when it comes to dealing with issues of materiality and ideology as a mode of research. Therefore I consider this multi-lens approach important for mitigating the unduly dismissal of the valid critiques against the Eurocentric locations of both Religious Studies and Posthumanist discourses, particularly because both frameworks are already co-opted and form part of an emerging decolonization lexicon. As current discourses on Decoloniality (Murris: 2016, 2018; Nyamnjoh:2017; Nye:2019; Soto and Swandener: 2002; Sundberg: 2014; Tayob:2018) confirm, the term decolonization itself and its methodologies may hold very different meanings depending on where one is located (especially if that location occupies multiple intersecting sites) and thus it invites differing forms of responses and ways of responding, my analysis is therefore presented as just one of such effort from a faith-based feminist perspective.

To summarize, I consider an Islamic feminist lens to be a useful decolonising tool for engaging some of the blind spots, indifferences, racializing and Euro-centric bents of posthumanist frameworks. Thus by critically recognising some of the universalizing, eliding, reifying and racializing tensions and tendencies of Posthumanist and/or New Materialist frameworks, as noted in this chapter, I nonetheless consider there to be significant analytical value that a diffractive lens can offer my research study. It firstly enables me to theorize the co-constitutive material-discursive aspects of the spatialities of Muslim childhoods and *madāris* in South Africa. The diffractive reading I am proposing is one that is underpinned by decolonial intent. This approach is intended to capture the nuances of multi-levels of entanglements including my own positionality within the framework I use. It is an approach that foregrounds rather than disguises my relationality to the phenomena I am researching. The madrasah spaces I analyse provide richly textured tapestries of material-discursive entanglements, the vitalities of matter and multi-species co-worlding; where humans, the more-than-human, the animate and inanimate intra-act through and with and also co-emerge from vagaries of apartheid spatial neglect and marginalization, the inscriptions of colonialism and enslavement and the vibrancy of tradition, and experiences of hope, fear, poverty, beauty, faith and violence - each of these entangled phenomena produce the diffractive patterns that are the tempo and temperate of

Muslim childhoods. A diffractive reading also allows me to interrogate the lenses and concepts we use to analyse and filter or diffract research findings and produce knowledge, which are in itself processes that are laden with historical burdens of epistemic marginalization or privilege and therefore also holds significant material-discursive effects for how we undertake and present research studies.

In the next chapter I review an interrelated set of literature on childhoods and gendered pedagogies and discuss how these conceptual nodes are complexly entangled.

Chapter Three

Mapping Conceptual Entanglements: Childhoods and Gendered Pedagogies

> *Imagine a child, growing up in a certain city, born blind, but otherwise intelligent and well-endowed with a sound memory and an apt mind. Through his remaining channels of perception he will get to know the people as well as all sorts of animals and objects, and the streets and alleys, houses and markets – eventually well enough to walk through the city without a guide, recognising at once everyone he meets. But colours, and colours alone, he will know only by descriptive explanations and ostensive definitions. Suppose after he had come this far, his eyesight were restored and he could see. He would walk all through the town finding nothing in contradiction to what he had believed, nor would anything look wrong to him. The colours he encountered would conform to the guidelines that had been sketched out for him. Still there would be two great changes, the second dependent on the first: first the daybreak on a new visual world, and second, his great joy* (Ibn Tufayl's *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān*).[32]

Written in a North African town in the twelfth century by the Andalusian mystic-philosopher Ibn Tufayl (d. 1185), the above extract from the chronicles of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān* (Living, son of the Awaked) is the title and protagonist of Ibn Tufayl's allegorical novel about a feral child's self-learning journeys and spiritual awakenings.[33] In this mystical narrative, Ibn Tufayl creatively weaves themes of philosophical enquiry and existential musings, childhood epistemologies, autodidactic realisms, cathartic emergences together with critical social-religious-political commentary into an enduring episteme on human pedagogies. Although not explicitly a treatise about childhood, the trajectory of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān* presents a rhetorical provocation for thinking about how ideas about children, childhoods and childhood learning are multiply diffracted, variably mediated yet intricately entangled. This literary work has meandered far from its twelfth century Islamic intellectual life-worlds and has anchored its residual wisdoms in many different epochs and scholarly traditions (Verde: 2014). The meandering paths that concepts from *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān* have traversed exemplify how complex

[32] Extract from *Ibn Tufayl's Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān: A Philosophical Tale.* Translated by Lenn E.Goodman (2009) as cited by Jackson (2017:98).

[33] The story plot involves a boy child that grows up alone isolated from any form of human civilization and its organizing social structures. He is nurtured by his adoptive "mother" a gazelle for the first seven year phase of his life, the *childhood* stage. After his doe-mother dies, he learns to adapt by learning about his habitat. The feral child grows up and awakens to realities of an ever-present unseen creative force- which he determines to be God. His is a measured and explorative existential journey facilitated by intellectual faculties and deep contemplative states. The sub-plots of the narrative introduces two other (human) characters towards the later stages of Ḥayy's life and explores the social, political, religious and ethical dimensions of what it means to *be* and *become* human, that is, a living being that is at once corporeal, social and spiritual.

thought patterns merge, converge and re-emerge and forms sophisticated webs of intellectual exchange.

The kinesis of Ibn Tufayl's work provides an emblematic scaffold for considering a broad range of entangled discourses related to Muslim childhoods and childhood pedagogical spaces from a gendered perspective. Threading together an interrelated set of discourses, this chapter diffractively reviews how these concepts are discursively and materially enmeshed within the literature and in the knowledge-making processes. I use the trajectory of Ibn Tufayl's work as a roadmap or a bricolage[34] to help navigate a landscape of dappled scholarly traditions wherein notions of child, childhoods and childhood spaces are encountered. My intention here is not to engage the specifities of the text itself, but to use the imagery of conceptual entanglements or the meanderings of ideas as a way to illustrate what a diffracted reading of Muslim childhoods entails and to help circumnavigate the messiness and opacities of these conceptual tangles in a more creative way.

A diffractive reading, according to Bozalek and Zembylas (2017:10) is a detailed, attentive and careful reading of ideas one through another, that is, an attentiveness that avoids causing "epistemological damage" by "pitting one theory/ position/stance against another". Such a reading focuses on the "intra-actions of different viewpoints" and considers how they build upon or differ from each other to "make new and creative visions". Geerts and Van de Tuin (2016:4) similarly notes that feminist diffractive textual engagements do not employ a "hierarchical methodology" one that puts different texts, theories, and strands of thought against one another, instead they hold that, diffractively engaging with texts and intellectual traditions means that they are read *dialogically* or *through* one another to "engender creative, and unexpected outcomes".

Literature reviews typically involve citing formative texts, articles in peer-reviewed academic journals and referencing what counts as the canons within a given field, evidencing familiarity with the overall landscape wherein possible "new" or "gaps" in research are identified and are then expected to develop further or speak back to. Feminist and/or decolonial critiques for example, like other critical fields of analysis, may problematize the strain and stains of these discourses within, and offer alternate lenses to temper the hue , broaden perspectives or fill the gaps. Inevitably, however, they still need to do so within the very same structures that they

[34] A *bricolage* is used as a metaphor for quilting or stitching together seemingly random sets of data that when pieced together paints a landscape that can capture or depict the messiness or entanglements of phenomena.

seek to critique (Tayob, 2018:7). So, what counts as a diffractive review and what does it aim to achieve, or do differently? One of the key considerations in reviewing the literature on childhoods, gender and Muslim pedagogical spaces includes acknowledging how discursive-material entanglements shapes the research process. The *where*, *who* and *how* ideas are formulated and transferred is significant in shaping what can be and also what cannot be *known,* knowledges produced both inside and outside of academia, although variably filtered, are considered as co-constitutive materially-discursively contingent sources of knowledge. Not only are the parameters of research landscapes typically rooted in Eurocentric, patriarchal and other prescriptive thought patterns, but they also continue to serve as gatekeepers through which knowledge production is filtered. Identifying the filters and how they operate or interfere (Geerts and van De Tuin: 2013; Lenz Taguchi: 2010) and steer (Honan and Sellers: 2007) research is essentially what a diffractive literature review aims to achieve.

Implicit in the notion of a literature review is the assumption that a well -resourced list of references provides an objectively comprehensive if not neutral rendering of a particular field or subject. However, citational practices are deeply political acts and as such they direct one's research in very decided ways. Consider for example the very careful and thorough review conducted by Canosa and Graham (2020) on key theoretical developments within the field of Childhood Studies between the years 2010 and 2018. The article outlines the search methods used to gather related literature which included perusing institutional search engines, library catalogues and online databases for peer reviewed journal articles and published scholarly books as well as policy reports and official documents that matched the criteria for key phrases in the English language. They mention flagging certain keywords in the title or abstract and other related words in the body of the manuscript and acknowledged the limitations of their own inclusion criteria, which they've flagged as "grey areas or epistemic ambiguities" (ibid:27). After sifting through duplications and eliminating non relevant resources their total findings of 358 references was whittled down to a still substantial load of 148. Following this search process, they offer a detailed review of key theoretical contributors to the field. One of the important observations they make is to note that the types of studies they've flagged as *grey areas* or *epistemic ambiguities* actually makeup a growing list of emerging contributors to the field whose interests are focused on "Majority World" perspectives (such as childhoods in the global South or on the African continent, children with disabilities, migrant and immigrant populations) as opposed to the "Minority World" childhoods (typically bases of the western academic world) that had for the most part defined the main focus areas of the field since its

inception. In flagging these works as “grey areas” and “epistemic ambiguities” and in rightly pointing out how these have come to bear on changing and broadening the perspectival landscape of the field, the authors confirm how these subtle forms of mediations can often go unnoticed or fall through the cracks of the database search engines that many research scholars might employ.

However, the point I pay attention to here, is that in acknowledging that by limiting their literature search to the English language only, the reviewers were in fact extending the very same forms of exclusionary citational praxis that their own review aimed at critiquing, that is the lack of Majority World perspectives within the field of Childhood Studies (ibid: 29). Therefore despite the authors’ keen eye for flagging potential grey areas within the literature search process, and their principled stance in acknowledging how their own limiting criteria of inclusion only served to perpetuate the very processes they were critiquing – it is not an unimportant point to note that the review itself did nothing to actually correct this flagged anomaly. That is, by bracketing the important contributions of Majority World perspectives as epistemic ambiguities or grey areas, the scholars writing from and about the Minority World still held the same centrally featured place within the review, and those writing on and from the margins remained peripherally located. The optical dynamics of the landscape therefore remain unchanged, because little effort was placed on turning the optical scales based on what they had identified. *Flagging* a citation anomaly and *correcting* it through one’s work are both diffractive actions that are premised on differing sets of politics, and the effects of those differences hold very different discursive and material consequences within the research process itself.[35]

Diffractive readings are aimed at mapping the agential cuts a researcher makes through the optics of inclusion and exclusion. Therefore, at this point, I wish to disclose my own decision-making process or the agential cuts I make in choosing and arranging the contents of this chapter. The diffractive thought process emerged from my encounter with a particular text

[35] Childhood Studies as a research field is discussed in the following sections, I mention Canosa and Graham’s (2020) article here not so much for details of their review but mainly for the methodologies applied in accessing resources to be included in their review. The point I wish to highlight herein because it is something that is easily missed or often hidden in a footnote as an aside, is to note how the resource scoping and sorting process itself is one that is diffracted in particular algorithmic ways. In the above scenario, the absence or presence of a certain phrase held a particularly determinative role in how and what was possibly “known” or where and how it featured in the review itself. Strict disciplinary barriers or closed-knit specified fields of expertise, can have a similar gate-keeping effect. This is especially notable in an eclectic field like Islamic Studies/ Study of Islam, where feminist scholarly engagements often get bracketed as gender studies even if such works make significant intellectual contributions to the field as a whole on a wide range of subjects including gender.

entitled *Educating Children: Classical Advise for Modern Times* which is an English translation and commentary by Abdul Aziz Ahmed (2013) of Imām Muhammad bin Ahmed al-Ramlī's Arabic classical treatise on the education of children called *Riyāḍatul Ṣibyān.*[36] My interest in this text apart from the fact that it relates to my research topic is that it was published by and sold at one of the madrasah sites I had initially selected to conduct my fieldwork research study. In reviewing this work, a couple of peculiarities piqued my interest which has tangentially directed me towards what is now the arrangement of this literature review chapter. Firstly, in the translator's introduction, after thanking the long line of "great men" that he counts as his teachers and spiritual guides, Ahmed (2013: 9-11) notes the following:

> As a teacher trained in the West, I would not have access to this book without the great men I have mentioned…The influences of traditional Islamic teaching and Western education have undoubtedly shaped the way I have brought up my own children…I can now reflect on this text in a way I could not have done without the experiences of my own development under the influences of my parents and teachers, the valuable pedagogical tradition I experienced through my studies and twenty five years of teaching learners of various ages from nursery children to adults, and witnessing my own children grow and thrive.

Ahmed divides this translated text into four components, the first provides the original author's Arabic version together with an English translation. Thereafter he offers past commentaries on the text to help show the "traditional understanding of classical scholars of Islam", this is followed by his own "reflections" as a complement to the classical commentary. Finally, the discussion moves on to linking the precepts of the original work to a modern present-day context. Much of what has been included in his reflection segment emerged from and continues on from the author's life experiences and an online Facebook discussion forum that he holds together with other Muslim parents and fellow teachers. Thus, his is a deeply personal subjective reading of a classical Islamic text and a contextually invested engagement with a traditional body of Islamic scholarship.

Several aspects in particular diffracted from my encounter with the text, the first relates to Ahmed's mentioning that alongside the "great men" of the Islamic tradition, his ideas about

[36] An important aspect of the Islamic scholarly tradition is that texts such as the *Riyāḍatul Ṣibyān* are often commentaries or shortened versions of earlier works referred to as *mutūn*. In this case, Egyptian born Islamic scholar, Imām Muhammad bin Ahmed al-Ramlī (1513-1596) actually adapted a chapter from Imām Al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Revival of the Religious Sciences) a much more dense multi-volume body of work. Al-Ramlī's adaptation of al-Ghazālī's (d.1111) *Riyāḍatul Ṣibyān* is therefore a re-interpreted version that is presented in a literary format known as the *nazam* – a rhyming formula used for condensing huge tracts into shortened texts and the later expositions or commentaries of these works are referred to as *shurūr*. This literary tradition is aimed at preserving a continuous flow of ideas but in differently formatted versions.

children and childhood teaching and learning have been very much influenced by prominent European-American educational psychologists such as Vygotsky and Bruner.[37] I was particularly interested in unpacking his specific conceptualizations of the term *tarbiyyah* since it formed a central theme of my research. One of the descriptions he offers is to equate *tarbiyyah* (child nurturance) with commonly held notions of cultivation, gardening or planting, he notes "the tarbiyyah of plants requires one to choose the right soil, to water and feed the seedling and strengthen and support the growing plant" (ibid: 19). A conception, he admits, is probably one that was influenced from his readings of Rousseau's philosophy on childhood.[38] This admission and the ease by which these two very different intellectual frameworks were coalesced in the author's mind space, I found to be an especially noteworthy mediatory instance. It evoked for me the notion of conceptual entanglements, a notion that I was grappling with to help me think through my own diffractive framings of these entangled concepts. However, it was specifically his mentioning of Rousseau's influence over his own understandings of *tarbiyyah* that when read together with another set of readings (Ismail: 2014; Verde: 2014; Mentha: 2016; Önder: 2018) related to how Rousseau's own ideas were in fact influenced by the twelfth century Islamic scholar Ibn Tufayl and his narrative of Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān, that presented me with a motivating swivel moment. I consider these rippling effects of how concepts and influences merge and re-emerge as entangled sets of historically laden ideas to be an important diffractive aspect to capture. It also helps me to track how the interlocutors I choose to use in this thesis are in fact immersed in multiple epistemic worlds and how these multiverses direct my own thinking processes. Therefore what follows in this chapter is one way of navigating through these conceptual entanglements by using the imagery of the meanderings of Ibn Tufayl's work to Rousseau's Enlightenment ideas to Ahmed's translation of a classical Arabic text as a map for thinking about the dynamics and complexities of Muslim childhoods and gendered pedagogies.

The second critical diffractive moment I encountered whilst engaging Ahmed's text occurred, again, in his translator's introduction chapter. After providing the biographical details of the

[37] Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) an Eastern European constructivist developmental psychologist best known for his childhood learning and development theory referred to as the Zone of Proximal development. Jerome Bruner (1915-2016) an American educational psychologist whose childhood learning theory based on a pedagogical method of scaffolding.
[38] Genevan philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) emphasized the importance of expression in producing a well-balanced, moral and freethinking child. He argued that children should be allowed to develop naturally without constraints imposed on them by society in order to develop to their fullest potential. Rousseau's political and educational theories have had a significant influence upon European Enlightenment thinkers and strategists.

original author as well as those that makeup the list of classical *male* commentators of the text, Ahmed (2013: 12-13) concludes the chapter with the sub-heading *Riyāḍatul Ṣibyān – 'Training Boys or Educating Children'?*. Here he offers an explanation for some of the translator liberties he took in deviating from the literal Arabic text as well as the later commentaries on the text. This, importantly, includes his re-definitions of the terms *Riyāḍa* (which translates as physical training, domestication of animals, sports, relaxation or spiritual exercise) and *Ṣibyān* plural for *ṣabiy* (referring to a boy or male child) both of which form part of the original text's title. According to Ahmed, implied in the term *Riyāḍa* despite its clearly masculine inferences (that is according to some of the prevailing sentiments about male gendered attributes and masculine interests wherein the original text is located) the term can be more neutrally translated as *tarbiyyah* using the gardening/ nurturing imagery noted above. The term *Ṣibyān* he opines, although unequivocally referencing a male child, since the entire text itself consists of the author addressing a father figure on how to educate, train and develop "manly" qualities in his son, can be translated differently or more gender neutrally. Ahmed therefore diffracts from the literal and also the traditional consensus rendering of *Ṣibyān* as referring to the boy child, and suggests that he prefers to adopt the more generalized and grammatically possible translation to include girls as well. Hence his re-titling of the original Arabic text in English as *Educating Children* and not Training/disciplining boys – which is literally what the title and what the contents of the text holds.

Nevertheless, a pivotal point I want to raise here, is that Ahmed clearly considers this transition or deviation from the original intent of the text as unproblematic or a laudable move even towards gender inclusivity. A sentiment that is most likely to draw less attention to the underlying forms of patriarchy and offer a more gender-sensitive contemporary engagement with the text.[39] This disclosure in the introduction, is therefore expected to serve as a sweeping erasure of any gender bias within the text and the types of thought enclaves that such may have engendered historically. Therefore, it is precisely this assumption that a passive non-committal

[39] One of the ways Ahmed mediates the gendered bias of the original text is to include anecdotal snippets from the parent discussions and opinions expressed via his online forum. For example, in a segment dealing with the importance of creating time for children's relaxation and recreation, he poses the question: *should girls be encouraged to pursue an interest in sports?* (2013:78).Without explicitly imposing any notions of gender parity upon the original intent of the text, since it is clearly addressing a male child's need for rest and engaging in extra-curricular activities – Ahmed non-committedly offers his readers some of the personal views from several "anonymous sisters". These views held that females should be encouraged to engage in sports, but with some gendered caveats that relate to female modesty and strict gender segregation rules.

and cosmetic gesture of semantics, without actually problematizing it as part of a wider engagement with the tradition that griped my attention.

I now return to how and why I've relied on Ibn Tufayl's historical meanderings to guide my discussion about Muslim childhoods from a gendered perspective. For one, I considered the connections between the diffractive moves that Ahmed (2013) makes in re-reading the *Riyāḍatul Ṣibyān* as a gender neutral text and another similar engagement, Zahra Ayubi's (2019b) *Rearing Gendered Souls: Childhood and the Making of Muslim Manhood in Pre-Modern Islamic Ethics* which is a gender-critical reading of the same body of work (i.e.: Al-Ghazālī's advises for educating children) in concert with how Ibn Tufayl's narrative has also historically been read - to hold noteworthy if not coincidental parallels. For example, Fedwa Malti-Douglas's (1996) incisive reading of the *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* narrative though a gender paradigm, has described it as a "male utopia" where women are essentially elided in the text,[40] this is an aspect of the narrative that has mostly been left understated or ignored by many of its mainly male commentators.[41]

Similarly, Ayubi (2019b: 1) problematizes the types of decisions that are made, when texts from a tenth-century Persianate milieu such as Al-Ghazālī's advises for children are adapted and repackaged as an Islamic ethics text for Muslim children globally in the twenty-first century. Raising critical questions about the gendered nature of that adaptation process, she asks "what are the decisions involved in shifting the audience from one that is entirely composed of adult men to one that is more age and gender inclusive?" Thus unlike Ahmed's move of simply glossing over the deeply gendered undertones of the text in translating and adapting it, Ayubi, as well as Malti-Douglas, interrogates its premises and problematizes its

[40] A crucial aspect of Ibn Tufayl's storyline is that he offers two alternate origins options as to how his protagonist the feral male child Ḥayy came to be born. In the first scenario, the child is born out of a secret relation, and is abandoned by his mother to the waters, in a manner that closely resembles the biblical story of Moses. The second version is a more detailed account, based upon an understanding of Aristotelian physics and biology, of how Ḥayy spontaneously came to life from the soil of the desert and other nature peculiarities (Lauri, 2013: 26). Apart from the gazelle "mother-like" figure, who ceremoniously dies early on in the storyline, the rest of the tale is devoid of any female characters. Malti-Douglas (1996) critiques the underpinning inferences of this utopian world created by Ibn Tufayl without any females in it. The only two instances wherein females are present, that is, the mother-like figures of the human birth mother and the adoptive doe mother figure, are mentioned only as an aside to the main story. Females and the utility of the feminine, in the narrative and in the utopian world it envisions, are rendered easily dispensable.

[41] Rousseau's works have been similarly critiqued for his "insufficient attention" to and "total avoidance" of and "misrepresentations" of its underlying forms of gender bias (Darling and Van de Pijpekamp: 1994). Mary Wollstonecraft's 1792 book *Vindication of the Rights of Women* also responds to the objectifying ideas about women that are presented in *Sophie,* the fifth volume in Rousseau's novel series entitled *Émile* – a storyline that is noted to have been inspired by Ibn Tufayl's narrative.

effects. On the other hand, Ayubi (ibid:5-8) also filters her own critical reading of Ghazālī's conceptualizations of children and childhood by drawing equivalences to European pre-sociological models of childhood developed by Enlightenment theorists John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau.[42]Although acknowledging that Ghazālī's works and ideas actually predate those enlightenment formulations of childhood, this entangled history of ideas when filtered through Ayubi's gender meta-analysis is read in very different ways to how Ahmed has read and also linked Rousseau to Ghazālī. Ayubi is consciously rendering visible the gendered assumptions in these epistemological foundations of the discourse, which is something that Ahmed is blind to. Both Ahmed's *Riyāḍatul Ṣibyān* translation and Ayubi's ethical reflections on Islamic childhood pedagogies as well as Malti-Douglas's reading of Ibn Tufayl's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān,* are instances of very specific forms of gendered textual intra-actions that diffract in particular ways that I consider important to pay attention to when reviewing literature on Muslim childhoods.

My interest in using Ibn Tufayl's narrative as a navigational tool is to firstly help me map the discursive terrains of differing intellectual fields wherein the notions of childhood/s in Islam are developed, contested and/or coalesced. These terrains may converge in ways that are convivial and reciprocally productive, however, historically they have also done so in ways and contexts that were colonising, dominating, antagonistic and eliding. Childhood discourses are embedded within particular civilizational aspirations and societal attitudes that are often coupled with or informed by specific forms of political rhetoric, religious polemic, theistic sentiment or social expediency. Thus there are wide ranging implications for how children and childhoods are understood and positioned within specific social contexts, including how they are conceptualised, represented and prioritised within different disciplinary frameworks.

Secondly, I use Ibn Tufayl's journeyed work as a way to smudge the notion of conceptual coherence or pristineness. Concepts generally hold residual effects of its historical paths and intellectual interactions, so they are always in diffractive motion. My intention in using the historical instance of Ibn Tufayl's work as a scaffold or bricoleur, is premised on capturing the interdependencies of conceptual networks between various disciplinary fields and to map some of the agential cuts made within the literatures I engage. A diffractive reading of childhoods and childhood pedagogies is one that is receptive to holding multiple pliable understandings

[42] In the following sections I discuss these concepts in more detail, just to briefly note here pre-sociological childhoods refers to a framing of children/ childhoods as natural or developmental, that is a life stage that occurs naturally outside of and therefore not impacted by social influences.

simultaneously. In other words, meanings and understandings about children and childhood or how they are reflected in a specific set of literature are considered to be the *effects* of particular intellectual and material intra-actions. Indeed, my own engagements with the literature and how I choose to re-present it here is considered another affective cog in that momentum, in that it too diffracts in intentionally selective ways. To be clear, Ibn Tufayl's *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān* serves as an illustrative and navigational apparatus *only* to help me map the currents and flows of ideas about children and childhoods more imaginatively, therefore its utility herein is simply pragmatic rather than textually central to my discussion.

In charting the historical arc that threads Ibn Tufayl's mystical narrative from its twelfth century Andalusian cultural and religious milieu to present day Muslim childhood pedagogical spaces in SA – I diffract along several side-tracks to bring together disparate sets of discussions and debates about childhoods as it relates to my research study. To facilitate this conceptual mapping I use the instances of Ibn Tufayl's work as *anchoring* points which I have listed as sub-headings referred to as "moorings". These "moorings" enable me to arrange the literature I engage more thematically.

The discussion is organized as follows, I consider firstly, how the concepts childhoods and childhood pedagogies have historically been discussed within the broad sweep of the Islamic tradition. This provides a glimpse into the pre-modern or classical religious and civilizational contexts wherein the idea of childen/childhood and the madrasah space has been conceptualized. Thereafter I track parallel discussions that emerged from Enlightenment thinking about children and childhood and discuss how they were located within that particular civilizational model and its attendant societal structures. An important mooring point key to my own analysis is to consider some of the post-modern perspectival shifts that facilitated the development of "Childhood Studies" during the late 1980s. As a multi-disciplinary emergent field of research, "Childhood Studies" is generally considered a robust reservoir of diverse theoretical nodes focused on the social study of childhoods. Diffracting from these discussions, I problematize the notion of "peripheral" childhoods and discuss the politics of childhoods by engaging a number of scholarly approaches to childhoods. Together these moorings are aimed at meandering through different tracks of scholarly engagements and presenting a kinetic snapshot of past and current thinking on and about children and childhoods. It also maps out the discursive landscapes wherein I locate my research study.

3.1. Mooring 1: The Muslim Child, Islamic Childhoods

> *A gazelle who had lost her doe hastens to the sound of a crying baby. She adopts, feeds, and raises him until he is over seven years old. As a boy, endowed with keen intelligence, grows up, he begins to observe nature and the animal world around him… One day, however, the gazelle dies. Frightened, but wanting to save her, he reasons that the gazelle's inertness must be due to an invisible impediment. He decides to open her up and look for the seat of the impediment. He finds it in the left ventricle of the heart. He discovers that the obstacle is nothing but the permanent departure of a vital principle located in the ventricle. And that leads him to think of the body as a mere instrument of a life-sustaining principle, without which the body is nothing. After burying his "mother", he wonders what that principle is, what unites it to the body, and where it goes.* (Ibn Tufayl: Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān)[43]

Interspersing practical facets of child rearing and care work, together with organising childhood development and learning in progressive stages, and offering particularly detailed nuggets of scientific medical proficiency - the above extract offers an illustrative snapshot of the dappled intellectual worlds the story-teller is immersed within. Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Abd al-Malik ibn Muhammad ibn Tufayl al-Qaysi (d.1185), penned the philosophical narrative *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān* during the latter part of his life whilst living in Marrakech.[44] Apart from his other scholarly works on medicine and astronomy, this novel is noted to be Ibn Tufayl's only extant literary work, an earlier version of the narrative is attributed to the Persian polymath Ibn Sina (d.1037).[45]

Ibn Tufayl's narrative emerged within a particular twelfth century Islamic context that amalgamated varied cultural and intellectual histories. This included a meshing of the theistic worldviews initiated in seventh century Arabia, the revelatory era of Islam which provided an abiding set of moral and religious frameworks premised on sacred text, the Qur'an and the teachings of its progenitor the prophet Muhammad. It also incorporated subsequent generations of engaged legal, theological, ethical and educational thought and its attendant structures of social organization. In concert with these developments was an escalating proselytising enterprise wherein Islamic political rule was regionally expansive and where Muslims encountered and therefore also absorbed into its civilizational trajectory an eclectic menu of differing cultures and philosophical worlds. Lapidus (2002: xix-xx) refers to this bourgeoning period as a "tripartite complex of tribal-ethnic, religious and courtly-aristocratic cultures from

[43] English translation of Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān by Attiyeh (1963).
[44] Marrakech served as the North African metropole of the 11th century Al Murabitun (Almoravid) dynasty which incorporated western parts of the Maghrib regions as well as Al-Andalus in the Iberian Peninsula.
[45] Jackson (2017:85-86) notes several versions of the narrative or works with similar themed plots to Ibn Tufayl's story.

which all later versions of Islamic civilization derives". He further notes, that it was a period that gave rise to Arabic literature, Islamic religious teaching and cosmopolitan artistic achievements.

The twelfth century Islamic intellectual world wherein Ibn Tufayl was located was especially notable for its robust engagements with and borrowings from Greek philosophical works. These intellectual exchanges, according to Jackson (2017: 86) "required considerable ingenuity, as well as philosophical and theological rigour to harmonise religion with philosophy". A dynamic that is aptly captured within the mystical impulses of the *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān* narrative. These types of deep spiritual -religious reflections meshed with scientific or rationalist insights formed part of the creative vigour that characterized the classical Islamic scholarly tradition. As such, the reception of Ibn Tufayl's work amongst medieval Muslim society was not necessarily exceptional in that it emerged from and existed amidst many other similar scholarly endeavours (Idris: 2011; Verde: 2014). Ibn Tufayl's ideas have historically since the seventeenth century been engaged and appreciated by western academics for its literary prowess and philosophical insights (Conrad: 1996; Lauri: 2013; Ismail: 2014).

Increasingly however there is more attention being given to the narrative's richly textured cultural and intellectual backdrop and its incisive offerings of scientific and medical knowledges as well as the complexity of its esoteric, political and social deliberations (Conrad: 1996; Idris: 2011; Jackson: 2018; Ismail: 2014 Verde: 2014). For example, GA Russel's 1986 study entitled *The Role of Ibn Tufayl: A Moorish Physician in the Discovery of Childhood in 7th Century England* is one attempt to read Ibn Tufayl through this fresh light, however his framing is ultimately in relation to, and therefore also filtered through an Anglo-centric prism. Thus Russel's framing of Ibn Tufayl as the "patron of all young minds and the emancipator of children" has rightly been called out by Conrad (1996:4) as not only projecting singularly upon Ibn Tufayl an unwarranted accolade, but in doing so he also ellipses an entire cultural-religio-social network that informed and saturated Ibn Tufayl's world of faith and thought.

A more discerning lens for understanding medieval Muslim children or childhoods through the Islamic tradition is to consider it as part of a broader kinetic history of entangled networks of thought. Ibn Tufayl's masterful weaving of medical sciences, religious dictates together with rationalism of Greek philosophy, mystical insights, social learning theories, political and theological debates reveal not only the eclectic intellectual currents of his day, but also provide a window for exploring prevailing understandings of children and childhoods within that

milieu. More importantly, they can also help locate some of the lenses through which these depictions of childhood have been filtered.

A sampling of how Muslim childhoods and children's Islamic learning has historically been thought about or discussed in the literature during the classical or pre-modern period is noted from the following. Giladi (2011: 242-243) for example, examined the rich corpus of biographical dictionaries, chronicles and diaries, legal writings on children, from the Mamluk period (1250–1517) in Egypt and Syria, including lamentation poems and consolation treatises for bereaved parents. He concluded that these writings "reflect an urban society that on the whole invested in children on three levels: the intellectual, the emotional, and the economic". He also notes that the foundations of Islamic attitudes toward children were laid down and developed during the first centuries of Islam. Therefore most urbanized regions in Middle East, North Africa, and Al-Andalus, where scholars displayed interest in and concern for children had established a ''great tradition'' of child care and education. A value that, according to him, played an important role throughout the Islamic civilizational history.[46]

Developing and incorporating this "value" as part of the Islamic tradition can also be noted from the works of African scholar Ibn Sahnun (d.854), based in the city of Qayrawan in northern Tunisia noted to have been a "flourishing economic, administrative, cultural and intellectual centre" (Abdullah *et al*: 2014:44). Ibn Sahnun is renowned for his abiding influence over how Muslim children's Islamic education has been developed and practiced in many regions across Africa and much of the diasporic Muslim world. Well known as a teacher of the Qur'an to young children, his treatise *Adab al-Mu'allimīn* is considered to be the first book about children's Islamic education and ethical prescriptions for Muslim educators, therefore it was considered a pioneering work for its deep pedagogical insights (ibid).

In a similar vein, Giladi (2005:106) notes that for many medieval Muslim thinkers, the upbringing of children including their moral education whether for young aristocrats or lay persons "concern for the individual was a central consideration". Giladi's study considers the ethical, pedagogical, legal and paediatric writings in Arabic from the Middle East, North Africa and Spain throughout medieval and pre-modem times, he notes that "personal guidance and intensive, close relationships between educator and trainee" were regarded as an essential part

[46] Sahin (2018:15) notes that most classical Islamic ethical thought and moral education, with few exceptions, have parallels with, or are modelled on, early Greek thinking. According to him, this was not a simple borrowing but a "creative appropriation and integration into the core revelation-based Islamic values".

of the educational process. Sahin (2018: 14) mentions the pedagogy employed by Ibn al-Muqaffa (d.670) a convert from Persia, who contributed to the literary and moral educational genre called *adab*.[47] He notes that when Muslims first reached Southeast Asia, largely through trade, they "integrated and creatively expressed Islam within this rich civilizational tapestry. The morally and spiritually redefined Islamic *adab* become easily adoptable by people who mostly voluntarily converted to Islam. The *adab* complemented and was richly reinterpreted within the indigenous educational cultures". This intellectual hybridity and civilizational exchange offers a context for re-thinking what knowledge inter-connections looks like without the erasure of epistemic histories.

Two widely cited works that provide a comprehensive look into the formation of institutionalized Islamic learning in the classical period of Islam's history is George Makdisi's 1961 study *Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad* and Tibawi's 1962 *Origin and Character of al-Madrasah.* Although neither works focus extensively on children's Islamic education, they do note the importance of the *kuttāb* (childhood spaces of religious learning) as a productive site for ensuring an educational vitality for Muslim communities. Their observations attest to the careful considerations given to and investments made in children's guidance, and nurturance as well as in the development and refinement of their intellectual, spiritual and moral capacities.

Bulliet's (1983) study on the other hand focuses on the period that pre-dates the institutionalized education structures of medieval Islamic world. He discusses the educational system within the city of Nishapur in north-eastern Iran before the formal madrasah became the dominant institution of learning. During that period, the study of prophetic sayings or *ilm-al-Hadīth* was paramount as was the initiation into and participation in informal circles of learning called *ḥalqah* or through the pledging of allegiance to a teacher-disciple relationship with an eminent Sufi shaykh. Although these intense forms of learning were typically reserved for older or mature "male" students (twenty five years is the youngest age according to Bulliet's estimation) that had already undergone the preparatory rigours or foundational religious learning and training. He suggests that "typical students had begun their education by the time they reached the age range 4.8-10.2" and also notes that *ḥifẓ* (memorization of the Qur'an)

[47] *Adab* (pl. *ādāb*) when used as literature refers specifically to classical Islamic literary works. The term *ādāb* (pl.*daʾb*) also refers to habits, dispositions or behaviours and is used in reference to practical ethics. The term *ta'dib* is a key Islamic pedagogical concept that refers to moral training and self-discipline.

study regularly began in childhood and were “concurrent with elementary training in reading and writing” (ibid: 109).

Ruth Roded’s *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections: From Ibn Sa’d to Who’s Who* (1994:124) recounts the important role that women such as Zumurrudh Khatun (d.1161) from city of Damascus played in the establishment, constructions and upkeep of madrasah colleges, mosques as well as Sufi learning spaces such as *khanaqa, ribāt, zāwiyyah* by way of generous endowments. Most medieval scholars like Ibn Khallikan mention in their biographies about childhoods spent learning from and receiving *ijāza* (permission) to transmit *aḥādīth* (prophetic narrations) from women teachers (ibid:127).

These historical observations about Muslim children, learning spaces and religious pedagogics are intertwined with various contextual currents of theological, political, legal and other social imperatives. Thus whilst they may attest to the general significance attached to children and speak of the considered levels of investments made towards their care and flourishing – they do not necessarily account for the specific ways such undercurrents have shaped or have been shaped by these entanglements. For example, Ibn Tufayl’s narrative interweaves the criticality of rationalism as part of an educative discourse on human pedagogics and ethics, but at the same time, he also contends with a knowledge framework based on prophetic guidance and revelation. It therefore creatively addresses some of the most pressing doctrinal and educational debates of the time regarding the role of reason and philosophy within an Islamic purview of dynastic rule that was justified upon Qur’anic and prophetic directives. Such types of civilizational undercurrents that span centuries of intellectual webs therefore provide broad stroke indicators of how children and childhoods were conceptualized in early classical Islam.

Casting a gendered lens upon this historical record of Muslim childhoods requires a far more attuned level of reading, since medieval Islamic gender norms, when read retrospectively, often reveals more about the reader than what is read. Or put another way, the types of enquiries we make of, or seek through such historical texts, demand that we also recognise the adultist and gendered nature of recording the history of childhood thinking. When such depictions are filtered through the minds, experiences and pens of males only; which has historically been the case with Islam and most other traditions, then the sifting out and processing through that gendered history requires a more attentive labour of intra-textual reading. One way of gauging normative understandings of children and childhood learning through this fragmented mapping of historical documentation is, as Rosenthal (2007: 334) suggests, through its “popular

literature". Works produced for mass appeal, although they do not necessarily map out a qualitative outlook of an era they can represent "filtered and simplified versions of the thought of the comparatively few who constituted the intellectual elite at one time or the other". I consider hereunder some studies on gendered modalities of medieval Muslim childhoods from this perspective.

Hirsch's 2014 study *Outward Appearance of Children in Medieval Muslim Legal Texts: Modesty, Adornment and Gender* examines three genres of Islamic scholarly works to piece together an informative kaleidoscope of pre-modern gendered thought patterns about Muslim childhoods. The first set of literatures she scopes are legal compendiums of key Muslim jurists of the time, a genre referred to *furu' al-fiqh* which were "composed by authors of different schools of law which represent a wide geographical and chronological range." (ibid: 615). The second body of texts she analysed comprised of *ḥisba* literature which were official legal documents or guidelines formulated specifically for the office of the *muḥtasib* (a supervisor of the markets and public morals as a representative of the authorities). And finally she also consulted the writings of medieval Muslim physicians that focused on paediatrics.

Hirsch's study provides an instructive sketch of some of the discursive and material mechanics involved in formulating particularized gendered notions about children and childhood in medieval Islam. Her study focuses specifically on how these notions were reflected in the outward appearances of medieval Muslim children, in terms of their dressing, adornment preferences and comportments. These gendered notions, she holds, were not created in a vacuum but were instead anchored in local socio-economic, cultural and political realities. She considers these mechanics to reflect a continuing set of interactive dialogues between law and reality, or "desired norms side by side with existing customs". She points out that although they were developed over several centuries they do however "reflect the stability of norms and practices mostly in urban societies of the Muslim Mashriq, side by side with local variations and tastes" (ibid:615). I outline some of her key findings below.

From her review of medieval Islamic medical prescriptions, Hirsch (ibid: 616-617) notes that Muslims attached much importance to idealised physical traits of children. For example, tenth century Fatimid era physician Al-Baladī's medical notes included anecdotes and advice for potential parents about their best chances at having a beautiful child, such as to surround themselves with beauty, to choose a beautiful spouse, to create a home filled with beautiful objects and to also keep good looking well- groomed house servants. His medical advice

included specifying that the couple hold beautiful thoughts during the conjugal act itself. The failure of conceiving a beautiful child, he suggested, was due to the mother's fault in holding less than beautiful thoughts during the conception. Hirsch points out that such notions of conceiving an idealised child are clearly gendered, since the burden of failure and blame is attributed exclusively to the mother.

Her research further found that Islamic scholars paid attention to the covering of the pubic area. The legal corpus deals extensively with covering up private parts and makes legal recommendations for maintaining same-sex private spaces including the bathing of children as precautionary measures against unwarranted sexual arousals for both adults and children. These precautions are applied only once a child has reached an age of abstract discernment, which, according to Hirsch (ibid: 617) was normatively established to be around six or seven years old.

Hirsch points out that Muslim scholars discussed clothing styles and dressing in distinctively gendered ways. She notes that whilst there are no specific legal opinions prohibiting specific dress preferences for the male or female child, there is a body of evidence in the form of recommendations or instructional guidance directed towards the prepubescent male child. The general understanding was that male children would be socialized and schooled through the *kuttāb* system into adult male ways of being and dressing, and the girl child is assumed to follow the norms of female spaces. Therefore certain adornment and dressing prohibitions, such as wearing silk or gold, that apply to adult males are gradually applied to male children as they mature. The basic assumption is "that after early childhood, although there is no definition of a specific age, girls will resemble their mothers in their outward appearance and boys will resemble their fathers" (ibid: 618). Hirsch notes that whilst head coverings, are an important legal issue in the adult world, the topic is almost absent from the legal discussion of children's outward appearance. She concludes that not only were children not obliged to cover their heads, but the legal silences on this issue suggests a lack of gender distinctions in early childhood.

Gender features more prominently in the ways children's adornments were regulated, such as prohibiting or allowing certain types of jewellery, wearing of amulets and body piercings. The literature Hirsch reviews herein offers conflicting opinions, she however reads these legal variances as evidence that jurists have applied gendered yardsticks to determine what was permitted. For example, some jurists consider the wearing of jewellery such as bracelets,

earrings and necklaces generally permissible for both the boy and girl child, however after the age of seven a restriction is placed on boys only, in that they are prohibited from wearing gold specifically. Amulets also raised another contestable issue for jurists, since on the one hand, its usage bears roots in pre-Islamic and ancient East cultural norms as a way of warding off evil spirits. However, its practice was adaptable to Islamic theistic sensibilities by incorporating Quranic iconographic motifs and prayers into amulets and was therefore often worn by Muslim children and adults alike.

Piercing of children's ears and circumcision posed another set of contentious legal issues. A range of legal positions are cited by Hirsch to illustrate how jurist's applied gendered lenses. For example, a thirteenth century Ḥanafī jurist considered it permissible to pierce girls' ears for purposes of adornment since this custom was already popular at the time of the prophet Muhammad, as such the jurist opined it is not an innovation (*bid'a*), but rather a continuity of the ancestors' way. A fourteenth century Ḥanbalī jurist however claimed that whilst it is permissible to pierce girls' ears for wearing earrings as they need this type of adornment, it is prohibited to pierce boys' ears as this is a mutilation with no religious or medical reason. Whilst another jurist held that it is permissible to injure girls' bodies only for bloodletting as a medical treatment and for circumcision (*khitān*) but not beautification. This latter view, according to Hirsch is especially telling, she notes "while piercing is considered a permanent mutilation of the body with no need, circumcision on the other hand, which is a mutilation as well, has a sublime goal" (ibid: 622). There are clearly problematic and gendered reasons why one form of circumcision (male) is seen as a medical advantage that enhances sexual health and pleasure, whilst the other (female) is used as a regulatory measure to curb or monitor female sexual pleasure. However, this is not the argument Hirsch makes in her study. Her discussion fails to mention juristic consensus on the issue of male circumcision in Islam, or the fact that it was a practice inherited from Judaic-Christian and other tribal cultures and incorporated into Islamic customary practice.[48]

Although Hirsch's study consults a broad body of literatures to analyse the particularities of juristic opinions on childhood issues, and her precise lenses enables her to sketch a fascinating

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[48] For example, Hermansen (2012: 121) notes that in present day Türkiye male circumcision is performed relatively late in childhood and is a rite of passage celebrating masculinity, while in many other Muslim societies… it has become a medical procedure performed in infancy". The Islamic juristic basis for the continued practice of female circumcision is mostly regionally and/or culturally applicable and not as widely accepted as Muslim male circumcision. This an important clarification to make if applying a gendered lens to juristic opinions about *khitān*, and its omission herein is puzzling.

portrait of medieval Islamic childhood gendered modalities, I however also think that the lenses she applies, or the agential cuts she makes, filters her perspectives in somewhat limiting and narrowed ways. Whilst pointedly focused on drawing out the gendered, her analysis comes at the expense of maintaining a similar sense of sustained focus on the nuances of juristic difference and its implications for Muslim praxis generally. For the most part, her analysis assumes a sense of coherence between a broad set of vacillating legal literatures and Muslim experiences across millennia. By framing juristic opinions through an overly determinative regulatory prism, her analysis seems to suggest that the Islamic legal framework provided an overarching instrument for prescribing and regulating Islamic gendered norms.

Whilst not discounting the forceful metiers of juristic opinion, it is a framework designed to be contextually evolving and flexible (a point that is clearly evidenced in the data Hirsch analyses). By not framing it as such and by using a very limiting range of analytical tools, Hirsch weakens the veracity of the broad conclusions she draws about not only medieval but Muslim gendered praxis universally. For example, she concludes that because the information regarding boys' appropriate and desirable outward appearance is "not a coincidence" it is therefore "an indication of the preferences of patriarchal structures" (ibid: 623) – which is a reasonable observational metric to apply. However she goes on to make a further set of rather over-reaching claims from this one observation, but doesn't really offer any explanations or provide further evidence as how she arrived at them using the narrow set of lenses from the data she *has* engaged. She thus concludes:

> In Muslim societies, as is the case in many other societies, homosexuality was a common phenomenon, and it seems that the discussion of boys' outward appearance, especially during pre-adolescence, is meant to guide them towards the proper way and encourage them to form heterosexual relationships. An adoption of feminine clothing and adornments by boys hides the differences between the sexes, threatens males' identity and hegemony and encourages homosexuality, a deviation from god's will and from the right path. Based on Muslim jurisprudence, the normative assumptions were aimed at ensuring the existence of a bi-sexual world with no other categories such as *Mukhannathūn*,[49] which might endanger male dominance and legitimise different definitions and categories of sexual preferences and practices (ibid: 623-4).

[49] The Arabic term *mukhanath* is used in juristic and other literature to refer to effeminate males. There is a growing body of Muslim LGBQT+ engagements that offer more nuanced analysis and sharper arguments than what Hirsch merely sashays over unconvincingly in this article, for example, Kugle (2010) *Homosexuality in Islam Critical Reflection on Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Muslims* applies a careful interpretive lens to discuss broader issues of sexual diversity within Islamic foundational and secondary sources.

Hirsch's judicious reading of gendered childhoods in mediaeval Muslim society is thus diffracted in very particular ways through the types of agential cuts she makes.[50] By extrapolating from a complex field of Islamic juristic and medical literatures, she offers an instructive lens for thinking about both the broad discursive formations and the materialities of certain articulations *about* medieval gendered norms. However, she also fails to engage some of the nuances of juristic variances and does not consider the oscillating and varied contexts for these differences. Therefore what she invariably presents is an essentialist and reductive understanding of the Islamic tradition as one that is overly determined by and lived through its legal precocities.

In the final analysis, Hirsch's study invites further scrutiny not for the details it offers in terms of understanding medieval Muslim childhood gendered norms better, which is descriptively rich and widely resourced, rather it is the types of implicit labours her overall conclusions *about* Muslims and Islam are intended to perform. I would venture that her study appears to be more intent about portraying Muslims and Islam as part of an overwhelming patriarchal system that is instrumentalized through an inherently discriminatory legal framework, rather than presenting a critical gendered reading of classical texts. Thus she presents a sweeping assessment of an entire tradition not just its traditional systems. Many other gender-critical research studies, including Islamic feminist engagements have offered similar re-readings of Islamic legal literatures (Hoel and Shaikh: 2013; Kueny: 2013; Seedat: 2016; Mir-Hosseini *et al*: 2018; Mattson: 2018), however, it is also important to locate the underlying premises that inform such engagements. If these premises lack nuance then any blind spots or omissions are not merely incidental but are effectively essentializing and partial. Of course, my own reading of Hirsch's unstated intentions, or what I consider to be the subtext of her study, are just that, my own set of intra-textual lenses being applied in intentionally diffractive ways.

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[50] Diffracting Hirsch's study through a broader geopolitical context of her institutional setting and reading her work intra-textually together with a parallel lens of "pinkwashing" - a political agenda that seeks to portray Israel as a fun-loving gay haven while using racist stereotypes to depict Palestinians/ Muslims as backward - lends a different perspective. When located this way, her conclusions or what I identify to be the subtext of her study, appear to diffract in very intentional ways. In the case of Israel, both the state and its supporters argue that Israel must defend itself because it is the only country in the Middle East where gay people have rights. This argument aims to divert international attention away from Israel's violation of Palestinian human rights https://queersagainstapartheid.org/campaigns/pinkwashing-campaign/ (accessed 7 March 2020). Relatedly, Jasbir Puar (2013:337) coined the phrase "homonationalism", wherein he notes that unlike pinkwashing, homonationalism is the historical convergence of state practices, transnational circuits of queer commodity culture and human rights paradigms, and broader global phenomena such as the increasing entrenchment of Islamophobia. Given the types of unexplained leaps Hirsch's arguments relies on, I think her conclusions may reflect some of these deeply located geopolitical conflictions, as one possible explanation for the substantial gaps in her analyses.

Zahra Ayubi's engagement with classical Islamic texts brings a different, more measured set of lenses for thinking about gender and Muslim childhoods. Two of her works are especially relevant, firstly her 2019(a) book entitled *Gendered Morality Classical Islamic Ethics of the Self, Family and Society* which provides an in depth study on Islamic philosophical ethics landscape using a critical gendered lens. She argues that imbedded in this moral tradition is the notion of "virtue ethics" (that is enacted on three levels, the self, the home and society) which she holds has been created upon a male-centered imaginary of how Muslims are to live moral lives (ibid: 6). A second work, a 2019(b) article drawn from the premises presented in the above research study, but with a more focused scope is entitled *Rearing Gendered Souls: Childhood and the Making of Muslim Manhood in Pre-Modern Islamic Ethics.* For the purposes of this chapter's conceptual "mooring" station about Muslim gendered childhoods specifically, I focus mainly on the latter text.

In the article, Ayubi (2019b) uses a "childhood studies in religion" lens to analyse a set of prescriptive discourses within the medieval Islamic ethics genre that deals specifically with the subject of rearing of Muslim children. As a scholarly enterprise, she notes, Muslim ethicists devised instructional guidelines about how they envisioned Muslim children and how they needed them to act in order to "fit them within an ideal framework of ethical and gendered roles for adults." (ibid: 3). Her study analyses two texts in particular, namely, *Kimiya-i-Sa'adat* (Alchemy of Happiness) by Abu Hamid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) and the *Akhlaq-i-Nasiri* (Nasirean Ethics*)* by Nasir ad-Din Tusi (d. 1274) which according to her, are considered to be definitive examples of the classical Islamic ethics tradition.[51] This category is also commonly referred to *akhlāq*[52] in the literature. The main purpose of these types of texts, according to Ayubi, was to "provide elite men with behavioral guidelines to refine their character and position them for leadership in their homes and communities, linking personal gendered ethics to morality at the societal level" (ibid). Her critical reading of these texts argues that such instructional iterations were used for "inculcating gender roles from birth" and also that such ethical cultivation was

[51] Ayubi notes that although Ghazālī and Tusi hail from distinct and ideologically opposite backgrounds of the Sunni Seljuk context and the Nizari Ismaili community, respectively, she juxtaposes the two to "show that there is a unity in their ideas about how to rear children, the gendered nature of the soul, and the ways in which masculinity and religious ethical responsibility are intertwined". A diffractive move that may hold resonances with what Hirsch's study does as well, however there are significant differences in the forms of analytical energies exerted in both engagements.

[52] The term *khuluq*, pl. *akhlāq* is generally translated as character. *Akhlāq* can also be divided into two broad categories: a) theoretical ethics: this refers to a specific genre made up of the principles of conduct (*suluk*). It consists of fundamental principles and general rules extracted from them; b) practical ethics: this refers to the set of principles of conduct https://www.dar-alifta.org/ (accessed 6 February 2020).

"the purview of elite men, whereas women were marginalized from ethics instruction". Her main arguments are therefore premised on the assertion that girls are marginalized and continue to be infantilized well into adulthood; whereas boys are reared to become disciplined men and patriarchs of their families and societies. Extracting salient points from Ayubi's discussion on these medieval ethical prescriptions, I outline below some of the key conceptualizations of Muslim childhoods and also map her gendered reading of those conceptions.

Ayubi looks at birth rituals as one area that helps to locate how childhoods are understood within the Islamic tradition (ibid: 11-13). Births are generally considered "blessed events" for both boys and girls. Birthing consecrations that are not necessarily gender distinctive include, enunciating the *athān* (call to prayer) in a new-born's ears, shaving a child's hair and offering a sacrificial animal as a form of charity and a sign of gratitude to mark the sanctity of the occasion. The latter however holds certain gendered connotations in that some scholars prescribe sacrificing two animals for a male birth and a single for a female birth. When read through the lenses of pre-Islamic Arab practices, this appears to suggest that a male birth is valued more than a female. In pre-Islam, the girl child was considered a harbinger of bad luck or regarded as a financial burden for tribal communities, thus female infanticide was commonly practiced. This practice is however specifically rebuked in the Quranic text, therefore the disparity in the number of sacrificial animals can also be understood as a way of discouraging the association of females as burdensome or bad luck. Another argument for the gender disparity in the number sacrificial animals offered is that males are seen as a longer-term investment for fathers, whilst daughters' roles within the household are time-bound to her getting married and leaving the familial home. Since these are recommended birthing ritual practices, they are also contextually variable in application.

The practice of selecting wet-nurses to suckle a new-born child and the ethics that informs its practice is also interrogated by Ayubi (ibid: 12). She argues that Muslim ethicists' prescriptions herein are underpinned by specific forms of elitism. For one, the practice assumes an elite family orientation where the father holds the sole responsibility of selecting a suitable wet-nurse. The medical rationale ethicists used for advocating a criteria in selecting a suitable wet-nurse is based on the understanding that the quality of breastmilk is enhanced if the wet-nurse is physically, mentally and morally healthy, since lactation transmits to the child not only nutritional value but also any potential physical and moral diseases. By assigning the responsibility of selecting a suitable wet-nurse to the father, it affirms his leadership role in the

family since the father is excluded from the maternally focused birthing process itself, he gets to take back control by being the moral authority in the wet-nurse selection process.

Ayubi also focuses on a set of ethical prescriptions that support boys' development and flourishing through specific pedagogical practices that pre-empt males as exemplars of Islamic manhood, domestic heads of household and civic leaders in the public arena (ibid: 13). These prescriptive formulations fall into three broad categories, the first are considered generalized disciplinary and rationality principles that are aimed at inculcating a sense of self-control and obedience to parents, including observing the religious prescriptions of the daily prayers and other rituals. The second area focuses on self-regulatory moral enhancements for the child such as learning about proper eating, dressing, speaking and recreational etiquettes. The third, is a more advanced and long-term educational strategy that prepares a boy child with a training and learning regime aimed towards developing a proper skillset of knowledges that would enable him to mature into his future adult role as head of household, care-giver and community leader. In this way, Islamic pedagogical ethics are premised on socially training and preparing boys with moral refinement and intellectual skills that assume their future roles as leaders in both public and private spaces.

Advices for rearing a girl child, Ayubi notes, are not as voluminously featured in medieval texts as are the attentiveness given to the nurturing and educating of the male child, girls are mostly discussed in terms of their roles in relation to male authority figures. Since these gendered prescriptions are often implicitly stated or are couched in a rhetoric of caring fatherly gestures towards his daughter, Ayubi applies an acutely sharpened lens to identify these subtle nuances and its gendered implications. For example, fathers are promised a generous afterlife reward if they struggle through the afflictions of bringing up two or more daughters. Ethicists therefore emphasize the immense opportunities for spiritual reward that girls bring to their fathers. The context of this reward though, rests on women being an ordeal to manage and causing great difficulty for the fathers who must execute responsibilities on their behalf. However, the same spiritual reward does not exist for "arranging the affairs" of sons (ibid: 22). The girl child "as a source of reward" is also discussed by ethicists in relation to her as an adult woman and her future role as a wife. In this context too, her subsidiary capacity only gets transferred from father to husband. This, Ayubi notes, poses a "metaphysical tension" for ethicists like Ghazālī, since his conceptualization of females in general, and of girls-as-emergent-women in particular, are as deficient, weak, and "destined to instrumentality from

infancy". One of the possible reasons why such *akhlāq* literature focuses less if at all on the rearing of girls particularly when compared to the attentive treatment it affords to male children, according to Ayubi, is precisely because ethicists believed that the *nafs* (inner self, inherent nature) of females can never be ordered using the science of ethics (*ta'dib-i akhlaq*). Ethicists concede that women, like men are both predisposed to letting their weakness or deficiencies get the better of them. However, they also believe, that unlike men, girls and women do not have the capacity to learn to manage their own selves that is why "their husbands will do it for them" (ibid: 27). Islamic texts on child-rearing, Ayubi argues, circumscribe girls and women into marginal, instrumental roles that serve the fathers' or husbands' purposes, and it is these gendered epistemologies that underpin the broader ethical frameworks for thinking about childhoods and childhood pedagogies.

Ayubi's reading of these advisory or *akhlaq* texts provides a carefully engaged perspective on how the Islamic ethics genre more broadly, and the two medieval Muslim ethicists in particular, filter and prescribe certain gendered norms using curative tropes about child rearing. And by addressing the authoritative male figure heads as their intended reading audience, this gendered underpinning gets uncritically sustained as normative Islamic practice. Her study demonstrates how such thought patterns both create and maintain the ethical frameworks wherein Muslim children are nurtured and educated, and how Islamic childhoods are imagined using gender as a distinctive marker of difference and unequal forms of preference. What Ayubi does not address however, that I think is central to these advisory formulations, is how disregarding gendered differentiations, might unfairly prejudice male children – who are expected to bear the responsibility of financial care-taking as adults, whereas girl children are not. The lens of male preference, is not inherently unequal if the differential scales of responsibility are factored in.[53] What Ayubi reads as female marginal roles that are instrumental to men only, can also be reversed or be read more commensurably as preferential care and ease that are afforded to females, that males do not enjoy. Within the historical context of a pre-Islam society, where males as carers and nurturers of children were not regarded as the norms of manhood, these ethical advises can be seen as a radical shift in men's familial roles by attaching the

[53] Giladi (2005: 106) for example sees this difference as a religious-moral *accountability* that the father shoulders that comes in response to the legal-practical responsibilities he bears in a patrilineal-patriarchal family. Male guardianship, he notes, over a child's person *(wilāyat al-nafs)* includes overall responsibility for physical care, socialization, education and includes the duty to marry the child off when the child comes of age.

responsibility of child-caring to fatherhoods as well and not framing care-work as a uniquely female role.

Ayubi's engagement however, importantly brings another critical perspectival layer for thinking about Muslim childhoods - that is, childhoods not only as a conceptually gendered category- but also one that is principally premised on upholding and maintaining particular forms of elitist social hierarchies. So whilst her reading of gender into these prescriptive texts offer salient observations about medieval Muslim child rearing praxis, she concomitantly renders visible the types of ethical barometers used to create and position class structures as part of a broader Islamic educative framework.

Ayubi's reading of the sociality attached to Muslim children's dress and adornment preferences (beyond the outward gendered formations that were identified in Hirsch's study above) reveals embedded layers of elitisms and classed assumptions that make up the purview of such childhood imaginaries. For example, instructional advises for mentally and socially conditioning young boys into adulthood include specific guidelines for young boys dressing and comportment (ibid: 17-18). These advises were geared towards creating a sense of nobility and respectability by prescribing what types of dress and adornments are suitable for "nobleman" and also what was to be avoided. As such boys were advised to avoid looking, and dressing in feminine ways since female dress sense was associated with weakness, or as holding a penchant for the soft, fashionable and decorative rather than the practical and protective sensibilities expected of a noble male. In other words, preferred masculinity traits were defined by practical and sensible dress codes, and by implication feminine traits lacked practical sensibilities. Signet jewellery for males however was seen as markers of class and social distinction rather than merely decorative forms of adornment. Such insignia were worn by males as displays of familial association and wealth status. The point Ayubi makes in highlighting these childhood ethical advises is that such forms of adornment, extravagant eating and ornate dressing preferences, including selecting the best options and paying premium rates to suckle new-born babies and other such privileged social practices were only options available to elitist wealthy families. Thus such instructional guidelines and texts are not only overtly gendered in orientation, but also fundamentally re-inscribe a class based ethical model for thinking about Muslim childhoods. This vision of childrearing, Ayubi concludes is "at once gendered and hierarchical" (ibid: 14). Ayubi's reading of these medieval child-rearing texts raises deeper questions about the underlying class assumptions that inform Islamic gendered ethics genre more generally.

The types of questions Ayubi raises problematize the ideational spaces wherein specific gendered notions of Muslim childhoods are imagined and created. Her interrogations of the underlying ethics of childhood nurturing expose the implicit and explicit ways gender and classed understandings are multiply diffracted. Muslim ethicists' conceptions of child-rearing and their idealistic prescriptions for Muslim children and Islamic childhoods are, according to Ayubi, not dissimilar to Enlightenment era theorisations of childhoods that consider biological differences between males and females as inherent signifiers for the natural hierarchal ordering of society (ibid: 6). Using this comparison as a way to segue onto the next "mooring" section, I consider some of the childhood formulations devised by Enlightenment thinkers and its entangled modalities with modernity, colonial and imperialist schemas.

3.2. Mooring 2: The Developing Child, Natural Childhoods

> *Ḥayy and Crusoe are isolated from society amongst nature, Ḥayy and Émile explore the natural environment from infancy; all three characters observe, experiment and reflect on their relationship to the natural environment and 'thingness'...Each is either a child or becomes `like a child', cultivating physical requirements of survival in order that 'true' intellectual and moral activity can be nourished later. The pinnacle of their learning is reflected in full, purposeful and rational adulthood and mastery: Ḥayy attains self-enlightenment, Crusoe is master of `his kingdom' and Émile is a citizen of morals* (Mentha, 2016: 47-48).

The fictional worlds of Ibn Tufayl's *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān,* Daniel Defoe's *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile / On Education*,[54] as noted from the above extract, converge and diverge in eloquently diffracted ways. The abstract encountering of Ibn Tufayl, Daniel Defoe and Jean-Jacque Rousseau's ideas has been discussed in a number of studies (Conrad: 1996; Lauri: 2013; Mentha: 2016; Önder: 2018; Ismail: 2014; Verde: 2014) each offering variant perspectives on the interlacing thematic flows of their respective storylines that connects these differently located philosophical and literary worlds in interesting ways.

For example, Ismail's 2014 doctoral thesis discusses the interweaving influences between Ibn Tufayl's ideas to that of Enlightenment scholars. His study analyses how Ibn Tufayl's narrative

[54] The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe written by Daniel Defoe was first published in 1719. The Crusoe narrative blends Puritan spiritual autobiography with travel adventure tales, it combines romance, fable and allegorical modes to weave a coming of age and voyage of discovery story plot. The broader themes of survival skills when isolated from human civilization as well as knowledge gained thorough the elements of nature and self-learning didactics holds resonances with not just Ibn Tufayl's narrative but follows and features in the story plot of Rousseau's *Èmile* narrative as well (a five volume set of books in French) published in 1762.

was received in early modern England, as well its reception in twelfth-century Morocco where it was written. He considers whether Milton's *Paradise Lost*[55] may have been influenced by *Ḥayy* since Milton had access to other medieval Islamic sources, and concludes that there are definite shared elements in both storylines. Regarding Ibn Tufayl's influence over the ideas of Enlightenment era's founding theorist John Locke (d.1704), Ismail argues that Locke in fact disagreed with the claims made in *Ḥayy* and suggests that Locke closely examined these claims in order to point to its epistemological errors. In reading Daniel Defoe's *Crusoe* trilogy, Ismail points out that Defoe merely mimics *Ḥayy* in order to develop the religious or spiritual aspects of Crusoe's character. The religiosity of Defoe's character Crusoe, as Ismail notes, is "in some ways complicit with the colonial project" but argues that the author uses the character development of Crusoe to "reveal the violence of colonial practice and to critique the moral and political philosophies that underpinned colonialism" (ibid: ii-iii). By comparatively analysing Milton's, Locke's and Defoe's engagement of *Ḥayy,* Ismail viewed each of these texts as "mediating between different historical worlds". He suggests that these three English writers found *Ḥayy* attractive because it "offered new ways of imagining and thinking", although they clearly imitated *Ḥayy*'s narrative in major aspects, he sees originality in their responses and adaptations to their own contemporaneous English world (ibid). Ismail therefore considers this to be a convivial encountering between different literary and epistemic worlds rather than an appropriative or exploitative one.

Relatedly, Mentha's (2016) research study entitled *Being, Becoming and Potential: Thinking coproduction and coexistence in early childhood education* locates the convergences of Ibn Tufayl's narrative with Defoe's *Crusoe* and Rousseau's *Émile* as similar themed treatises *about* childhood pedagogies. Yet, this converged heritage, she argues, is framed in childhood educational studies as uniquely European or based on original western narratives. John Locke, for example, as a key figure of European Enlightenment, is eminently punted for his understandings of child as an "empty vessel" in terms of knowledge. This notion however is widely understood to have emerged from his encountering with Ibn Tufayl's narrative.[56] Mentha notes that both Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) along with Rousseau's *Émile* are considered to be key

[55] John Milton's (d. 1674) epic poem *Paradise Lost* is presented in a voluminous set of ten books and deals broadly with biblical themes of the creation of man, his fall from heavenly grace and tackles issues of idolatry and Christian morality from a Protestant perspective.

[56] Ibn Tufayl's text was translated into Latin by Edward Pococke junior, as *Philosophus Autodidactus,* and published in 1671. John Locke is understood to have been a student of Edward Pococke senior, who first encountered the text on his travels (Mentha, 2016:49).

texts that have conceptualized the child as "a source of shaping future society" and these texts have also had an influential bearing on post-enlightenment conceptions of "the natural and innocent child" (ibid: 52). The use of the nature-child metaphor, and education as a site for a natural unfolding of humanity's potential are based on Rousseau's ideas on nature and the natural states of "man" as stages of humankind. Childhood, in this sense became a word for conceptualising simplified natural states, an idea already well advanced by scholars like Ibn Tufayl.[57]

The fact that this history of converging educational ideas is mostly unheard of or left untold or only partially told, is of course not accidental, it merely reflects one version of a collective yet epistemically violent colonial history. So unlike Ismail's reading of this encounter as mutually convivial, Mentha critiques it as a colonising trope of westernized memory. Her decolonial reading of this history therefore aims to present an alternative perspective on childhood educational thought in ways that do not erase the genealogies of ideas. Enlightenment epistemologies of children stemmed from a broader set of intellectual engagements that were premised on seeking an improved human condition in the future. Thus the childhood theories that emerged from this period formed part of Enlightenment understandings of time, nature, rationality, science, progress and development. These latter deliberations provided the theoretical bedrocks upon which European modernity was built, its attendant instruments of imperialism and subjugation were rationalized, its models for childhood pedagogies designed and its benchmarks for children's *natural* developmental stages and educational standards were calculated. Some distinguishing features that Mentha (2016: 45-81) mentions are noted below.

During the latter part of nineteenth century Europe there were important shifts in theorising childhoods, particularly in terms of thinking about children's development from a mind-body perspective. These shifts were enabled through the scientific gaze on the body and its functions including the emergence and interventions of psyche-sciences.[58] Emerging child sciences

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[57] Mentha discusses key Enlightenment figure Emmanuel Kant's (d.1804) influences on shaping discourses on childhood in much detail, which I do not focus on, suffice to say that Kant further developed Rousseau's idea of the child representing a state closely aligned with nature, although the emphasis is on immaturity rather than innocence. Where Rousseau saw the differences between `natural man' in a pure state and the child born into society, Kant asked `where do we take our stand?' in development of human talents.

[58] French philosopher, mathematician and scientist, René Descartes (d.1650) is a central figure associated with theories founded on a mind-body dualism. Sigmund Freud (d.1939) and Jacques Lacan (d.1981) are two key psycho-analytical theorists who are influential in how children have been conceptualized in post-enlightenment contexts.

where children underwent systematic processes of clinical observation were underscored by a range of societal aims. Children's potential was to be harnessed to develop an intellectual elite and create a better social order. The development of child sciences coincided with reforms in public health and hygiene as well as education.[59] Reformers viewed the intersection of physiology, psychology and pedagogy as a necessary inter-relationship which could shape upright citizens and society.

Enlightenment era childhood theories formed part of a social ordering within an even broader scope of the European civilizational project. Various scientific disciplines and discursive tools contributed to the production of grand narratives through which European society understood itself in relation to others. Childhood theories were thus constructed in light of the various disciplines which emerged through a colonial spatio-temporal imaginary, permeated by theories of social ordering, development and progressive values. For example, Spencerian and Darwinian ideas provided the theoretical linkages for global order, categorisation and hierarchal organisation.[60] Harnessing the potentiality of children through education served European civilizational visions of development and progress, childhood education/schooling provided the catalyst for social and political reform. The visibility of education as a condition for civilization is therefore woven throughout the European modernity venture. In this framing, the nature of childhood was shorthand for a state of being that was considered both undeveloped and uncivilized, which was then applied to all conquered and colonised people. Civilizing was at once a classed, ageist, racialized, and gendered enterprise.[61]

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[59] Medical science research linked public sanitation to children's health and improved child mortality rates. Medieval children in Europe were often neglected, abused, mistreated and even killed (Brown: 1977; Ryan: 2008; Peters and Tesar: 2017; Crane: 2018).The development of the x-ray in 1895 is one example of how medical science mediated on childhood health and well-being, with the x-ray doctors could highlight the plight of child physical abuse by making visible purposefully inflicted injuries that children sustained (Crane, 2018:28).

[60] English biologist and philosopher Herbert Spencer (d.1903) best known for his evolutionary theory of progression, developed the notion of "survival of the fittest", a theory of natural selection – that applied to not just the natural world but extended its premises to social and ethical world as well. Spencerian ideas were adapted from Charles Darwin's (d.1882) influential work on the theory of evolution entitled *On the Origin of Species* published 1859.

[61] Marwah (2019: 110-111) notes that Kant's liberalism, moral ethics and political vision "contains no conceptual resources to understand human differences in non-instrumental terms, or as anything other than conduits to, and for a future state". In Kant's moralistic vision, differences (non-European, female and child) are treated as deficits, they represent the raw states of an undeveloped humanity. Another critique on how Kant's liberalism and moralistic framing not only filtered his engagement with Ibn Tufayl's narrative and Islamic mysticism generally, but also how their educational philosophies differed, is noted by Jackson (2017:91). He observed that "Kant sees this [Ibn Tufayl's *Ḥayy*] as pseudo-philosophy and places Arab culture in this same category. *Marifa* or intuitive knowledge as advanced in the *Ḥayy* narrative, is not, according to Kant, knowledge at all. Kant defines human understanding as "a small land with many boundaries" but his definition has very specific European boundaries in mind, thus Kant's notion of knowledge is decidedly partial.

The above are broad stroke indicators about some of the influences and motivations that emerged from European Enlightenment era thinking about children and childhoods. Although they do not flesh out the granular details of specific childhood theories, they help in casting a panoramic gaze to a historical context of entangled idea formations. Marwah (2019: 231) importantly cautions against the "epochal fallacy" or the time-flattening assumption that a certain essence characterizes a period of time. Mindful that the terms enlightenment, post-enlightenment, modernity, liberalism, romanticism, evolutionism, progressivism and so forth, although conveniently cathected, are not in any way wholly indicative of an *essence* that can be defined as the "West" or *the* colonising project of Enlightenment. Therefore, in collapsing the term *Enlightenment era* intentionally broadly, my aim is merely to identify the historical contexts wherein ideas of child and childhood learning were distinctively premised on sentimental notions of child as *natural* and childhood as *developmental* or what is referred to in childhood studies as "pre-sociological childhoods".

Peters and Tesar (2017:8-9) describe some of the underpinning philosophies that informed seventeenth century developmentalist and sentimentalist childhood theorizations, For example, English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes (d.1679) saw children not only as savage but also as potentially evil, a conception that is closely tied to his humanist notions that all human subjects are born in original sin therefore human nature is essentially sinful. According to this pattern of thinking, unruly children need to be regulated and controlled, and the labours of such disciplining and taming falls on their mothers'. On the other hand, in Enlightenment progenitor John Locke's view, although children were considered as dependent, they were also regarded as potentially productive members of society. Thus his framing of children as empty vessels or a *tabula rasa* (blank slate) required "an episteme and ethics supplied by adult subjects" (ibid: 8) that is, the idea that family and society play the role of both reminders and minders of children that will push and shape them accordingly. A notable shift from Hobbes's thinking is thus noted in Locke's conception of children, whereby it is modern and progressive society and not just mothers/parents (and by implication religious tradition or the papal authority) that need to take on the responsibility of co-nurturing a child. Child-care was therefore premised as both a social and political enterprise, which was articulated through the formalised schooling of young children. Relatedly, children's natures in Rousseau's imaginary are considered "innately uncorrupted and good, and very much positioned in harmony with nature." From this perspective, it is the socialization and education a child receives from an adult world that "ultimately both spoils and misshapes their development" (ibid). Thus for Rousseau, protecting

a child from adults is his main concern and the key problem that his pedagogical theories aim to resolve. Therefore for Rousseau freedom is considered the most essential aspect child's education. Although framed differently, both Locke and Rousseau shift the balance of children's care-work from family responsibility to a shared interest and investment in by the state as a co-provider of that care.

There are wide ranging motivations and implications for theorising children and childhoods using developmentalism and/or sentimentalism frameworks. On the one hand, they were underpinned by Enlightenment futurity ideals and empire desires. In this view, as Ryan (2008: 551-561) points out, the types of positivist research about children's natures and development, although postdatedly critiqued for its objectifying methods and functionalist-instrumentalist aims, have nevertheless contributed to and hugely impacted upon how children are raised and educated to this day. For example, the quantifiable methods and developmental stage studies have resulted in employing universal percentile standards to children to gauge average or normative weight, height, growth for particular age groups. Piaget's widely influential ideas about children's cognitive and moral development, are incorporated in the training of many professionals (such as teachers, social workers, health care professionals) and are often reflected in parenting courses and handbooks (Morrow, 2011: 12-12). Industries that cater to the play and recreation of children and infants depend on such theories as well, which are notable in the types of age-specific toys and activities targeted for children. Modern day institutions were similarly developed to support a modern capitalist labour markets with the provision of child care and schooling as paid labour, particularly the formation of the *kindergarten*[62]. In this way traditional women's labours of care-work and child-minding that was only available to the upper-classes were made not only accessible but also deemed essential for worker class families (Alanen, 1988: 64; Norozi and Moen, 2016:77).[63] Developmental studies also impacted children's behavioural milestones, so social and personal proprieties regarding sex, intellect and morality are often benchmarked against these scientific studies that suggested children's behaviours could be controlled through a system of punishment and reward. The "children are the future" notion that pre-empted and supported

[62] German educator, Friedrich Froebel established a school for young children in 1837. He considered children as plants, and teachers/ care-givers as gardeners. Kindergarten literally means child-garden.

[63] Pointing out Marxist critiques of class as the reason for this emergence, Norozi and Moen (2016:77) notes that "the concept of childhood benefits bourgeoisie. Because the bourgeoisie need a well-educated work force to work for them. The modern concept of "childhood is a result of the whole great project of education and institutionalization that the bourgeoisie constructed to ensure that children grew up as useful as well-regulated adults".

Enlightenment aims, was therefore, according to Ryan (2008:562) instrumentalized and intellectualized using developmentalism as a scaffold.

Children's developmental theories and the sentimental romanticist's framings of pre-sociological childhoods can also be viewed as historically contingent responses to how children were regarded in European medieval societies. Underpinning these responses are Protestant reformist strategies that challenged papal authority and tradition as part of the Enlightenment modernization project. Two widely cited (Brown: 1977; Alanen: 1988; Ryan: 2008; Morrow: 2011; Norozi and Moen: 2016; Hanson: 2017; Peters and Tesar: 2017) works on the history of childhoods, Philippe Ariès' *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (1962) and a collection of essays on *The History of Childhood* (1974) edited by Lloyd DeMause provide subjectively critical accounts of pre-modern European parenting norms. These critical glances provide some context for the impetus towards theorizing children and childhoods as a specific category of seventeenth century public social-health-political-educational interest. For example, DeMause's study casts medieval adults and their attitudes towards children in the most negative light possible. He suggests that because of feudal brutality and harsh living conditions of medieval contexts, child-rearing practices were seen as expediencies and also as projections of adult's worst fears. Thus medieval children, according to DeMause, were not only ignored but also hurt, unloved, neglected, abused, mistreated and even killed (Brown: 1977; Ryan: 2008; Peters and Tesar:2017; Crane:2018).

Ariès on the other hand, is mainly accredited (and critiqued) for his observation - after studying medieval children's iconography such as paintings, literature, philosophical and religious tracts and letters – that the concept of *childhood* did not exist before the sixteenth century. He concluded that medieval societies had no awareness of childhood as a particular life-stage nor as it having any specific social import, that is, "a child was considered as an adult as soon as s/he could live without continuous attention of mother or caregiver" (Norozi and Moen,2016:77). Besides offering a descriptively rich portrait of medieval childhoods about the types of games, toys, dressing styles and other mundane activities of children, and relating evocative accounts of child-rearing practices of the time, Ariès study is also mainly focused on the upper and middle classes of European society, hence his views of medieval childhoods are also class specific. Thus his is a very different critique to DeMause's study that laments medieval parental brutalities and the period's uncaring insensitivities towards children,

whereas Ariès' study focused more on lamenting the "loss of an 'old sociability' between the generations under middle-class moralism" (Ryan, 2008:565).

This spectral history of medieval childhoods does not however suggest that there were any specific *western cultural* ceremonial markers or rituals that would indicate how or if that life period was differentiated in any particular way. Nor do historical records agree on the differing senses in which the term *child* was applied or when it seized to apply to humans during their life spans. At best, the notion of childhood, according to Peters and Tesar (2017:4), can be framed as "a performance of modernity", that is "a modern invention to colonise, treat, mould and shape the notion of 'childhood' as suits and serves the adults".

Pre-sociological theories that observed, measured and provided a universalizing codex for children's development stages therefore also teleologically and biologically framed childhood as an in-process phase and children were considered as still *becoming* and a not yet fully but a potentially social *being*. This framing, has been the subject of much debate and critique. These critical discourses have paved the way for incipient sets of alternative theoretical frames for understanding childhoods and children's pedagogies in a post-modern and post-colonial world. The next mooring section focuses on these sets of discussions.

3.3. Mooring 3: The Social Child, Constructing Childhoods

> *He was now anxious to learn all he could about the soul. Turning his thought in this direction, he started off by going over in his mind all physical objects, considered not as bodies but as having forms from which emerge their distinguishing characteristics. Clearly the acts emerging from forms did not really arise in them, but all the actions attributed to them were brought about through them by another Being* (Ibn Tufayl) [64]

Ibn Tufayl's *Ḥayy* narrative weaves a discussion on the "sociality" and "materiality" aspects of human learning and raises questions about the role and efficacy of society and/or nature as the optimal instrument of/for learning or as the subordinator of knowledge. Lauri (2013) for example, considers the *Ḥayy* storyline as presenting three specific utopian themes as part of a broader social-natural learning imperative. The first regards a type of utopian educational framework whereby knowledge is framed as self-taught and a self- learnt enterprise, in this way traditional authority is not only questioned but also resisted. The second regards projections of a utopian city, whereby corruption is seen as inevitable, so social utopia is

[64] *Ibn Tufayl's Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān: A Philosophical Tale* 2009 translation by Lenn E. Goodman, as quoted in Jackson (2017:96).

presented as only achievable outside of or only if separated from human interventions. In this way political organization or social ordering is not seen as desirable or an effective effort for human flourishing, since the social sphere is viewed as corrupting. The third presents a utopia of transcendence and provides ways for organizing human desire as an ethical template for a contemplative life and conscious living.[65] Similar utopian themes are threaded through the storylines of *Crusoe* and *Émile* narratives. In each of these texts, children (metaphorically presented as innocent, blank slates, empty vessels, immanent, natural and so forth) are instrumental to the construction of utopian ideals. Childhood pedagogies are therefore centrally imagined as a key scaffold for realizing society's idealized futures.

Ongoing debates about how, where, what and when children ideally learn, are best cared for and represented, have similarly occupied scholars in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Following developmentalist or pre-sociological theories of childhood in early modernity, children were understood as *becoming* or as incomplete versions of themselves or at a still developing *pre/potentially social* life stage before being a fully sociable adult or a functional participant in society (Alanen, 1988:56). The nexus between the *being* and *becoming* child, or the *social* and *natural* child and the constructed nature of childhoods and child as a social actor - mark some of the signature theoretical spaces wherein different modern-day questions of children and childhood education are asked.

Theorisations of childhoods as socially constructed emerges from a broader set of conversations within in the social sciences that critically engage key doctrines and structures of modern society.[66] These sets of engagements or the "discursive" or the "cultural" turn in the social sciences and humanities are rendered distinct by its "privileging of language and pragmatism to understand social relations and the construction of social categories"

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[65] Malti-Douglas critiqued Ibn Tufayl's narrative for its utopian desires as one that excludes any female presence, and considers it gendered and sexist. Lauri (2013: 28) however dismisses her critique as not using the lens of "utopia" *appropriately* and opines that her reading of the text would be better framed as an "unrealistic desire" rather than a commentary on its utopian themes. Lauri instead suggests that the absence of women in Ibn Tufayl's utopian world should be seen as part of a broader rejection of organized society in general (ibid: 31). Although, Lauri's *appropriate* utopian framing does not necessarily get him (or his defence of Ibn Tufayl's desired utopia) out of a gender bind, since it invariably lumps females as a social distraction for human contemplative pursuits, which is just as problematic as having them completely excluded from any utopian world.

[66] Some influential European/ American social theorists include Émile Durkheim (d.1917) best known for his functionalist theories that argued individuals are inclined to self -identify with other groups through economic labour and also form communities through shared goals and interests, including religious formations. French philosopher Michel Foucault's (d.1984) theory on discourse help explain the relationship between language, social institutions, subjectivity and power. French anthropologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu's (d.2002) theories of social reproduction and symbolic power emphasizes structural constraints and unequal access to institutional resources based on class, gender, and race.

(Popkewitz, 1998:548). These social and political theories however, were also mainly engaged thus filtered through white European male lenses, children's presences in these frameworks therefore were merely assembled in part to "support and perpetuate certain versions of man, action, order, language and rationality" (Alanen, 1988:55). Morrow (2011: 15) confirms, that up to the mid-1980s sociologists did not engage the subject of childhood explicitly except to cursorily note that it consisted of a life phase that involved socialisation processes whereby children became civilised and functioning adults.

In response to the paucity, Alanen (1988) and others started raising a different set of concerns regarding how children *specifically* were constituted within these emerging social theories. The theoretical child, she noted, has a specific place in research agendas. Merely inserting them into existing frameworks reaped paradoxical results (ibid: 57). For example, attentiveness to the socializing of a child into adult world, focuses on integrating them into a social world wherein the child is still negatively defined. That is, the focus is not on what it (childhood) *is* but and what it will *become*. The paradox lies in the inescapable ambiguities in defining childhood since it is always rendered through adultist lenses. Also, socialization as a concept is rooted in, thus relies on, making moralistic judgements between civilized and uncivilized – so children are invariably premised negatively on that scale. Reproduction theories as well are inadequate, since it has vested interests in how children are socialized through schooling institutions. In this framing, children are rendered passive objects in elitist functionalist tropes. Alanen (ibid) sagaciously points out that children, like women, are usually located peripherally in these macro-sociological theorizations. Children featured only in relation to broader conversations about family and schooling, thus not centrally. She however considers emerging feminist voices in the 1960s that questioned ideal types or typically traditional notions of a nuclear family as a significant diffractive moment since it meant that children's social realities were brought into sharper focus.

Normative notions of family and domestic life were considered part of a wider arsenal of industrialized society's conceptual toolbox that were aimed at protecting child labour abuses and creating childcare as an industry of paid labour. Such engagements nevertheless highlighted how narrow conceptions of typical family life ignored the materially different ways that families, and by implication children, are constituted in different cultural and economic contexts. Different forms of kinship ties, domesticity setups and division of family labours

were excluded from these broader sociological theorizations of family.[67] Feminist and other socially critical voices not only complicated the constructed nature of gender, sexuality and other social identity categorizations including race, culture and age, but also bring into conversation how particularized notions of motherhood and family life co-implicate childhood discourses as well.[68]

Key developments that followed this academic diffractive moment or discursive turn was the emergence of Childhoods Studies, that is, the social study of children and childhoods, in the late 1980s, as a dedicated field of sociological study in western academia. Coupled with the promulgation of international protocols and policy instruments regarding the care and protection of the world's children - such as the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989, which provides a set of universal guidelines which has been ratified by every country in the world, (to date with the exception of the USA and Somalia). This provided the discursive, self-reflective and also corrective space for scholars to think through the unintended implications and impact upon children as a result of adultist, culturally biased and biologically deterministic constructions of childhoods.

One of the main texts that spearheaded this new social sciences paradigm and fleshed out its objectives and conceptual frameworks - is the 1990 interdisciplinary volume, edited by British sociologists Allison James and Alan Prout, titled *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*. The collection expounded on the socially constructed nature of childhood/s, located children as social actors, privileged the ontological or child as *being* - which in turn not only contested but also rejected developmentalist notions of the pre-social *becoming* child. As the Childhood Studies field has substantively advanced and established itself after almost 30 years, it has expanded its academic footprint across various platforms including offering generous volumes of publication outputs in peer-reviewed journals, monographs and anthologies on varied child-

[67] Morrow (2011:5) points out, in many majority world (developing) countries, children's roles are very different and children's labour is considered crucial to household economies. Girls, she notes, often play a central role in domestic labour and sibling care-taking. These responsibilities are accepted as part of their obligations and contributions to family structure. The age range for how the childhood period gets calibrated, impacts upon how appropriate ages for children to start – end education, get married or become parents – since these often reflect western industrialized constructs of ideal families, they often exclude or denigrate as abnormal those cultures that may hold differing views about familial rituals and ordering.

[68] Margaret Mead's 1928 study on young Samoan women aged between 9 and 20 years old noted that "the passage from childhood to adulthood ('adolescence') in Samoa was a smooth transition and not marked by the emotional or psychological distress, anxiety, or confusion seen in many other western or European countries". Mead opined that this "was because Samoan girls belong to a stable society, surrounded by role models, where nothing concerning the basic human facts of copulation, birth, bodily functions, or death, was hidden and where Samoan girls were not pressured to choose from among a variety of conflicting values (Morrow, 2011:14).

related topics.[69] By merging its disciplinary boundaries with other co-fields like education, healthcare, law, and geographical studies, these entangled intellectual landscapes of Childhood Studies have cumulatively contributed significantly to enriching and refining how contemporary children are researched. Children now participate in and co-contribute towards their own representations in scholarship. Childhood Studies has also developed a set of research ethics for ensuring more responsible and accountable ways for casting a scholarly gaze upon children's lives and into their experiences of the world. Justifiably, following the initial birthing stages of this disciplinary spread, some of the founding tenets of the new sociological study of children and childhoods has also been carefully reviewed and revised (but also parsimoniously defended by some and invidiously protected by others).[70]

The dominant framework that guides the new childhood paradigm can be summed up as: the *being* child is a social actor in his or her own right, and is someone that is actively constructing their own 'childhood', and has "views and experiences about being a child"; whereas the *becoming* child is understood as an '*adult in the making'* or one lacking "universal skills and features of the 'adult' that they will become" (Upichard, 2008:304). Navigating the *social - natural* divide of childhoods and the *being - becoming* bridge has however, been one of the central theoretical hurdles that contemporary childhood scholars have had to grapple with. Another, involves addressing the ethical and practical implications of what it means to recognize children's agency and to also include their voices and experiences or have them as

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[69] Morrow (2011) and Ryan (2008) both offer extensive reviews of the vast bodies of literature developed in the first decade of Childhood Studies that suggest much of the work herein was focused on defining the identity or specializations of the field itself and fleshing out its research methods and refining its analytical tools on *how to* study children and childhoods *differently*. Canosa and Graham (2020) picks up this thread and offers a detailed review of contributions to the field during the period 2010 and 2018. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, one of the key findings they make, after conducting an extensive literature search is to note how the field has evolved and broadened in the last decade. Concerns about re-evaluating its disciplinary boundaries has therefore become a much deliberated issue, as are the discussions around re-assessing how emerging voices from Majority world contexts including global south regions have diversified its theoretical contours and enriched current perspectives about childhoods.

[70] Jens Qvortrup one of the founding members and key scholars of Childhood Studies is noted for his insistence of retaining the singular category of *childhood* as opposed to its organically evolved usage in the field as *childhoods*. Qvortrup often uses phrases such as "founding parents" "main pillars" and "inner circle" in his critiques to newer contributions to the field. These phrases indicate a need to protect and defend the positions and theories of the original contributors as the field continues to expand its territorial borders which in turn also changes the aesthetics of the field altogether. Ryan (2008: 554) suggests that Childhood Studies in the first two decades of its existence was effectively just a small group of determined researchers (mostly sociologists) who have created an increasingly self-conscious body of writing questioning some of the most commonly held opinions about children and youth. In the last ten years, the range of contributions from scholars that fall outside of the "founding parents" base or its "inner circle" (mainly white European male) of the field, shows increasing level of nuance that includes multiple perspectives, experimentally fresher methods, using more creative lenses, asking different types of questions and addressing pertinent 21st century concerns.

co-participants in the research process. For example, as Bluebond-Langner and Korbin (2007: 243) notes that in moving away from the notion of children as passive recipients of action implies another parallel and consistent move away from relying on statements by adults about children's worlds and experiences, in favour of relying on statements by children themselves. This shift has however posed another set of contentious niggles that complicate the methodologies applied in *doing* childhood studies.

A correlated issue is noted in how some contemporary Muslim scholars have creatively (re)interpreted traditional Islamic conceptions of children and childhoods to align with the liberal language and moral sensibilities of international children's rights advocacy campaigns such as the 1989 *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC).[71] For example, the notion of children's rights (*ḥuqūq al-atfāl*) in Islam is traditionally understood as a part of a reciprocal relationality that is entwined with rights of the parents (*ḥuqūq al wālidayn*). The concept of *ḥuqūq*, as Moosa (2012: 296-297) points out, holds multiple meanings that can refer to claims, entitlements as well as duties or responsibilities. As such notions of children's individuality, autonomy and moral flourishing are understood by Muslims using a range of positions in how "rights" are interpreted. Similarly, modern-day universalised definitions of childhood as a life-phase tied to age (CRC defines childhood between birth-18 years) is often incommensurable to Islamic notions of life-phases which rely on flexible sets of biological and cognitive measures to distinguish between childhood and adulthood.[72] A diffractive lens is therefore especially useful for understanding Muslim childhood*s* in place-attuned and context-specific ways.

Relatedly, Uprichard (2008) argued that framing a child as an agential being, or childhood as socially constructed in an effort to shift lenses from pre-1970s conceptions of child – the

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[71] The Al-Azhar University published a CRC position document together with UNICEF entitled *Children in Islam, Their Care, Upbringing and Protection* (2005) also the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) an intergovernmental agency that represents 57 Muslim majority member states published a similar position document together with the Danish Institute of Human Rights entitled *The OIC, Children's Rights and Islam* (Monshipouri and Kaufman: 2015). Both position statements have been compiled by a team of Islamic scholars, notably, neither of these documents have included Muslim female scholars as part of the deliberations about Muslim childhoods. Also, as Moosa (2012) importantly points out, these Islamic positions on childhoods are formulated without any supporting contextual studies that reflect contemporary Muslim children's lived realities.

[72] For example, a Muslim child is generally understood to *become* physically mature or *bālīgh* when a boy starts to ejaculate semen from sexual arousal, and a girl at the onset of her menstrual cycle. These physiological distinctions are different from emotional and intellectual maturity (*mukallaf)* which measures a person's ability to act independently, assume personal responsibility and be accountable for their own actions. These are not parallel milestones and do not necessarily occur in sequence, so there is no determinative age that marks when childhood ends, nor is there a concomitant extended childhood phase of adolescence in the Islamic tradition, contemporary Muslims generally tend to adapt their understandings to these dominant universalised framings.

quintessence of what it means to be a child in practical and biological terms gets muddled. She opines that it is possible to hold the complexities of both, the child as *becoming* together with the child as *being* – without reverting to developmentalist notions that *becoming* equals lack/ incompleteness, whilst still also recognizing the presentism of the child's *being* with agential capacities. Drawing on Prigogine's theory of temporality, where time and change are considered preconditions for all social and physical phenomena[73] – she suggests that the spectrum between becoming and being is a temporal issue not an ethical one or an intractable theoretical tension. Viewing childhood (like adulthood) as a pendulum swing between vulnerability and sophistication or between incompetence and competence – allows one to frame child as a temporality of being, that is a human state of being, i.e.: not premised or defined by age alone. In this way, it avoids associating conditions of competence with adulthood only or something one acquires with age. In this way children's capacities are not earmarked to adultist standards, since adults themselves are not consistently capacitated either. Prigogine's science of time as encompassing both change and continuities therefore helps to provide "a language with which to describe the way that we are all always ageing, from birth to death, and that the biological aspect to ageing is taking place throughout the life course, and the ageing process is always situated and experienced socially" (ibid). I find this lens especially useful for holding the complexities and diversities of contemporary Muslim childhoods.

Hanson (2017:282-283) similarly uses the notion of temporality as way of avoiding the *being-becoming* binary by including more complex relationships between children's past, present and future. He introduces what he refers to a *triolectical* conceptualization of childhood - that is a framing that is composed of 'been', 'being' and 'becoming'. Using the example of child soldiers in conflict zones that have been accused of grave human rights violations, and their experiences at United Nations reparation tribunals, where legal arguments were presented for the children's right of return and for their re-integration to civil society including access to schooling. Hanson argues that a framing that includes both a child's present and future but also does not discount where they have been (the historicity of childhood), offers a more productive lens for the study of children and childhood. He notes that by analysing how narratives of the past change as life circumstances change using a "temporality" lens helps researchers to think about childhood as a non-linear dynamic process. This "simultaneous and continuing traces of the past in the present", he suggests enables scholars to overcome not only the *being-becoming*

[73] Prigogine (1980) scientific rationale of temporality that Upichard frames her argument around echoes Barad and Braidotti's diffraction theories and vitalities of matter, as outlined in the previous chapter.

binary but also that between childhood and adulthood. He furthers argues, in a similar vein to postcolonial framings, that in embracing the 'been' child – it is an invitation, to replace the "us *vs* them" binary as well. The triolectical prism of *been'*, '*being'* and '*becoming* that he proposes, therefore offers "a productive conceptual lens for studying how children's present-days engagements with their own lives and the social world around them can integrate the complex and dynamic articulation of children's and childhood's individual and collective past and future" (ibid:284). Like Upichard's formulation above, Hanson offers a flexible framing that captures multiple intersecting nodes of children's realities.

The adoption of contextually contingent methods and experientially sensitive lenses for understanding childhoods reflects how the field has matured and adapted since its inception. This seasoned multi-disciplinary approach to Childhood Studies has ensured robust engagements from feminist, posthumanist, religious and other intersecting fields of interest - despite sometimes encountering resistance and objections (by some of the old guard) to the field's ever-expanding and porous disciplinary borders. This flexibility informs the types of creative methods scholars employ in listening to children's voices and guiding their responsibilities in how such experiences are captured and represented in research studies. The next mooring section explores some of these engagements.

3.4. Mooring 4: The Peripheral child, Politicizing Childhoods

> *When his gaze fell upon an animal that had fallen to a predator, become entangled in a knot, been pierced with a thorn, had something harmful fall in its eyes or ears, or was aggrieved with thirst or hunger, he took it upon himself to remove all of these things with all his effort, and fed and watered the animal. When his gaze fell upon one of the plants' and animals' sources of water and its flow had become obstructed with fallen rocks or a collapsed cliff, he would remove all these [obstructions]. He continued to devote all his efforts to this form of imitation [of celestial bodies] until his proficiency was at its peak* (Ibn Tufayl).[74]

The story of *Ḥayy* is a mapping of a child's entangled material and metaphysical worlds, navigating the fissures and hindrances of life, and finding space and a place to both *be* and *become*. It is at once vastly cosmic, as it is confined and confining. The peripheries of childhood/s that I focus in this segment include the intersectional spaces of gender, race and religion. The fact that Enlightenment's developmentalist theories and modernity's functionalist theories as well as postmodern /post structuralism's social construction theories *about* children occurred in concert with or as part of broader western world's civilizational ideals stands as

[74] Translation of Ibn Tufayl's *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* as quoted by Idris (2011:82)

an important backdrop for understanding how perspectives on childhoods are multiply filtered and diffracted both materially and in the literature. Feminist and/or decolonial lenses are particularly adept at identifying blind-spots as well as the gate-keeping tactics employed to filter out how and whose voices are represented and validated. Academic silos that serve as echo-chambers through its insistence of adhering to what counts as and what does not count as childhood studies research (or as not the *main pillars* of a field) are however also constantly being challenged.

The widening of childhood studies conceptual toolbox is critically imperative so that the specifities of children from postcolonial contexts can be witnessed and amplified. These include the political spaces wherein children and childhoods complicate and intensify how we observe them, the reasons why we observe them and what we might also fail to see or hear in our efforts to understand their worlds. For example, children in war zones, migrant and displaced conditions, Black, African, religiously persecuted, indigenous exploited, racially and ethnically profiled, interracial, differently abled, alternatively educated or queered are childhood experiential realities that require an expansive and flexible conceptual toolbox from which draw on. Contemporary research studies in these areas have developed creative explanatory mediums that are able to capture a wide spectrum of childhood interrelated complexities (Soto and Swandener: 2002; Viruru: 2005; Lesnik-Oberstein: 2010; Francis: 2017; Rodó-de-Zárate: 2017; Adomako: 2019), since the canonical tools of the field are not necessarily responsive to, or equipped to adequately grasp childhood realities that fall outside its normative scopes. In this section, I map some contemporary childhood approaches that expand the founding tenets of childhood studies and re-calibrate the aesthetics of the field in ways that are more attentive and responsive to the present historical moment.

In 2015 a group of feminist scholars from varied disciplinary bases participated in a series of interactive dialogues, to learn, refine and think through *together* a set of ideas about the interconnections between feminist and childhood studies. These discussions occasioned the 2018 publication *Feminism and the Politics of Childhood: Friends or Foes?* A collection of nineteen essays edited by Rosen and Twamley collated under three sub-sections, namely: a) *Tense Encounters: Gender and Generation* that looks at relations between and across women and children, probing questions about how, when and why reciprocities, animosities or complicities are created and enacted in these relationships; b) *Life's Work* segment explores the differing forms of labouring that takes place between and by women and children; it also

interrogates the feminisation of care work; c) *Political Projects and Movement Building* maps women-child intersecting interests and challenges and also charts justice through practical follow-up paths that can help advance equality for women *and* children.

Some contributors re-visit timeworn social theories such as Marxist or feminist poststructuralism and then insert a childhood lens as a new approach to seasoned feminist concerns. These engagements however do not necessarily add any layer of freshness, since it simply repurposes old arguments to new subjects. Others have applied intersectional lenses, which are better suited for mapping the precarity and complexity of mother-child relationalities, such as noting the cyclical nature of generational care work and the forms of mutual interdependencies and fluid vulnerabilities that occur as a result of aging, mental illness and also physical disabilities. One standout contribution is Pace-Crosschild's chapter entitled *Decolonising childrearing and challenging the patriarchal nuclear family through Indigenous knowledges: An Opokaa'sin project* (2018: 171-176). Pace-Crosschild problematizes the ongoing violences of settler colonial encroachments upon the child-rearing practices of indigenous peoples in Canada. She applies a decolonial filter to interrogate the impact of western models of family, schooling and childhood upon their cultural ways of being. The most salient feature of the indigenous Blackfoot tribes she studied, is the fact that mothers or women in general are never subordinate to, infantilised, or considered less than adult males of the tribe. That is a western, capitalist and modernist construct violently imposed upon colonised subjects. Communal parity in Blackfoot tribes is instead measured against age, experience and expertise and not gender or economic status. Traditional family structures are arranged around and therefore rely on a network of extended family members. Western notions of nuclear family, with clearly delineated roles and hierarchal structuring are offensive to their collective kinship functioning. Indigenous children are regarded as pure and sacred because they are seen as being closest to the spirits. The land, water and animals are central to their livelihoods and form part of children's learning pedagogies, and child-care is a communal responsibility. The term *Opokaa'sin* meaning "all our children" encapsulates that affect. One of the many ways settler colonial policies cause violence and disrupts familial structures is by placing Blackfoot children in national schooling programmes and also in foster homes on account of their mother's assumed inability to economically provide for them. The blatant deficiency in western / settler colonial conceptions of children, her study concluded, is that it does not have an attendant model that can conceive of family outside of the nuclear family setup or state care apparatus. The notion of *Opokaa'sin* is thus used as part of the indigenous peoples decolonising

arsenal in mobilising for their own educational and child-care reforms, and cultural preservation and reclamation.

Peripheral childhoods are also rendered visible/invisible (within western academic spaces) by the work of scholars multiply located. That is, physically and ideologically in the north but speaking for and about childhoods on the African continent as well as the global south, or childhoods that are politically and geographically in in-between spaces or occupy multiple spatial locations.[75] One of the ways that scholars located in settler colonies have undertaken academic responsibility for representational politics is through locating a consciousness of the epistemic injustices, and to use childhood framings as corrective lenses (Leibel: 2017; Donelson: 2018; Aruldoss:2019; Botchway *et al*:2019). Decolonial framings of childhood/s offer an apposite critical tool in shifting the narrative of peripheral childhoods. For example, Donelson (2018) study entitled *Theorizing a Settlers' Approach to Decolonial Pedagogy: Storying as Methodologies, Humbled, Rhetorical Listening and Awareness of Embodiment* frames her analysis using the practice of "rhetorical listening" as a method of hearing her participants' accounts, focusing on their backgrounds, teaching values and pedagogical practices, a strategy she refers to as an "indigenous research paradigm". What this framing offers is not only a corrective to the epistemic erasures of indigenous communities as an intentional instrument of colonialism but a way of being accountable to those who continue to suffer/ benefit from the effects of that childhood historicity.

The notion of *globalised* childhoods (as opposed to universalised childhoods) is another dialectical lens used for grappling with the complexities of a multiply enmeshed global- local worlds of children. Globalised childhoods accounts for a technologically and economically interconnected world that reconfigures how geographical spaces of childhoods are encountered. It also describes the contexts wherein childhood scholarship is produced, where researchers and research subjects are located. For example, Hanson *et al* (2018) notes current childhoods research is organically shifting towards collapsing geographical scalars between global-local but without necessarily coming to an agreement that *globalised* is the term that

[75] Prathama Banerjee, notes how the geo-political concept "Third World" previously served as a rhetorically charged currency in US academy that was useful only in discussions of epistemological hierarchies. The term "global south" she argues operates similarly in academia, since it masks the region's connected histories and shared thought channels. Just as the terms West/non-West as an organising principle is rendered unhelpful, the term "global south" is based on north/south binary, which engenders a forgetting of these histories of shifting cartographies of thought. Banerjee opines that a more helpful concept to use is "thinking across traditions" which allows for a carving out of thought regions anew. https://www.borderlines-cssaame.org/about Interview by Sohini Chattopadhyay uploaded on 6 November 2018 (accessed 13 May 2020).

accurately describes this shift. This articulates a broader conversation within the social sciences generally and not just those invested in childhoods specifically, a politics of academic location where the *majority world* is regarded as a site to extract empirical data yet the minority world remains the "sacred space" where concepts and theories about that world are developed (ibid:283). Globalising childhood issues such as migration, climate change, international corporate development investments, communicable diseases and other macro-political structures tend to ellipse regional effects or localised specificities upon childhoods.

The conceptual shift towards the "ontological" is one way that (western and/or west-located) scholars have grappled with the multi-situated, complexly entangled worlds of children and the study of childhoods (Taguchi: 2011; Nxumalo: 2018; Osgood and Giugni: 2015; Knight: 2016; Murris: 2018). Describing this conceptual shift as a "reaction to what has preceded it" that is - the focus on culture, discourse, representation and language during the 1990s, Spyrou (2019: 316) considers this shift to the 'real' and to the materiality of life, as a (re)turn to questions of ontology, to the "being-ness" and the "realness" of childhoods. He cautions however that this is not a return to a pre-sociological preoccupation about "essence" and "objectivity", rather it retains the critical insights of social constructionism and discursivity without ignoring matter or materiality as a central consideration in how childhoods are constituted. In the following chapters I unpack what an ontological shift entails in terms of thinking with and about Muslim childhoods and *madāris* in South Africa.

To conclude my review of the literature on childhoods and gendered pedagogies, I return to the Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān narrative as a bricoleur for diffractively thinking with and about childhoods. This chapter has meandered along a social-historical-conceptual-spatio-temporal arc where ideas about childhoods have emerged, converged and co-emerged from traditional Islamic framings to pre-sociological and sociological understandings of childhood informed by European Enlightenment aspirations to its residual effects in different contexts of the contemporary world. Each of the four "mooring" stations explored in this chapter, that is the "Muslim", "developing", "social" and "peripheral" contexts wherein childhoods have been conceptualised is intended to provide a broad diffractive mapping of entangled thought patterns as reflected in extant literature on childhoods. In the chapters that follow, I sharpen these diffractive lenses further by focusing specifically on the ontologies, relationalities and spatialities of Muslim childhoods in South Africa.

Chapter Four

Relational Ontologies of South African Muslim Childhoods: Mapping the Madrasah Space

Every child, my child is wrapped in a ribbon of rhythm[76]

Recapitulating, the main question that guides my research study is *how is the madrasah space gendered?* Beginning with the assumption that madrasah spaces *are* gendered, my research aims are premised on understanding Muslim childhoods and gender as a relational and materially contingent social phenomenon. The theoretical lenses I use to structure and think through my research question includes notions of diffraction, entanglement and intra-action, as outlined in chapter two of this thesis. These analytical tools developed by Donna Haraway (2004), Karen Barad (2003, 2007) and others (Braidotti: 2018; Osgood and Giugni: 2015; Nxumalo: 2018; Knight: 2016; Kuby: 2017; Taylor: 2017; Malone: 2018; Murris: 2018) provide a lens for thinking about childhoods, gender and childhood pedagogies as ontologically relational. In this onto-epistemological framework, nature-culture or material-discursive binaries are collapsed and human and more than human, animate and inanimate, organic and inorganic are seen as relational or sympoietic systems (a making with, co-worlding, interdependent multi-species agentive kinship).[77] Stated more simply, a relational ontology "expresses the idea that two or more entities are intimately related, so that one of the entities cannot be fully understood or described without considering the other/s" (Hammarström, 2010: 42). In collapsing material-discursive binaries, Muslim childhoods and madrasah spaces are understood as being co-constituted within an ecological network of epistemologies that include multiple forms of material and discursive entanglements and intra-actions. A diffractive analysis is therefore an explanatory medium that maps this complexity and provides a lens for thinking about relationalities of social phenomena from molecular, geographical and metaphysical scales.

[76] Lebogang Mashile's poem entitled *Every Child, My Child* https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/every-child-my-child/ (accessed 8 August 2020).

[77] The distinction between *autopoietic* systems and *sympoietic* systems are important to posthumanist thought, the former system considers humans as autonomous and having self-produced and self-organizing binaries, whilst the latter lacks boundaries and consists of complex amorous entities, therefore nothing or no one is ever alone, independent or self-making (Murris *et al*, 2018: 17).

4.1. Diffractive methods: Mapping patterns of interference

As a research method, diffraction provides a theoretical vocabulary that explains causes and effects of social phenomena in ways that are not singular, linear or unidirectional. A diffractive analysis does not presume a pre-existing set of phenomena or data to be gathered then represented as if such mirrors an objective set of realities. Rather, data is co-created or emerges from the intra-active processes of observation, gathering, analysing and re-presenting. Therefore the undergirding premise of diffractive methods is that knowledge claims are not *found* rather they are intra-actively and creatively *produced* through multiple entangled agencies.[78] In more practical terms, diffractive methods are used in a number of distinct ways to analyse how children "do gender" and to map how childhood spaces are "gendered". For example, Blaise (2013:188-189) recounts an encounter during her participant-observer ethnographic study at a children's educational centre that involved her own researcher adult gendered body, her earrings dangling from her ears and that of her participants' boy and girl child- bodies in relation to her own and that of other adult bodies, her diffracted field notes reads as follows:

> Amanda's girl child-body is leaning against my right shoulder, arm and side. She is asking me a series of questions about my earrings, such as, 'Where did you get them? Did your mum buy them for you? Did your boyfriend buy them?' She then starts stroking my hair, while saying in a soft voice, 'I really like your hair.' Roland has now joined us. He pushes his boy child-body past Zoe's girl child-body, and grabs my breast. My researching woman adult-body quickly reacts by tensing and moving away. I push his hand away while saying, 'Hey!' When my woman adult-body moves, Amanda's girl childbody wobbles. She holds on tightly to my shoulder. I react by pulling my shoulder back, away from her hand, while saying, 'Ouch, that hurt!' At the same time, I am looking up from the floor, trying to see if there are any teacher and parent adult-bodies watching. For a slight moment I feel panicky. In my field notes I write, 'heart is racing'.

In her material-discursive analysis of this encounter, Blaise considers the relational field where boundaries between adult-child, male-female, gender-sexuality, researcher-researched are subverted. The earrings, her breast, the girl's fascinations with her artifacts of socialised femininity, her questioning and the types of moral panic she felt at being touched and also at being observed by others being touched- are some of the micro-political practices or molecular encounters she pays particular attention to. Her diffractive methods of reading gender through its molecular or visceral forms, includes the sentient, somatic and semiotic intra-actions

[78] Relational ontologies reworks the notion of agency, in this framework agency is "not held, it is not a property of persons or things", it also not about *choice* in any "liberal humanist sense" instead agency is about reconfiguring epistemologies, material-discursive apparatuses and also being accountable for the epistemic worlds that emerge therefrom (Dolphijn and van der Tuin, 2012:54).

between matter-discourse-affective factors. When correlated with macro-political understandings of gender, the affective-cognitive, nature-culture or even subject-object are not relative or incidental separable details, rather they are discursively, materially and relationally salient factors wherein gender as a social phenomenon is co-constituted and enacted.

Similarly, Horton and Kraftl (2018) conducted a longitudinal study on children's outdoor play activities in an urban city of East London, UK. They note how much of children's worlds of play are left unregistered or are invisible and missed by the quantitative methods initially applied, analysis that relied on tables and graphs to document and report about children's socio-material experiences. In re-visiting their data for invisiblised/nonverbalised/affective and in paying closer attention to how their own researching apparatus affected and was affected in the processes of documenting, they offered a very different reading or a diffractive account of children's play activities as a material-discursive-affective encounter. By focusing on the ways the intangible and tangible, the human and nonhuman, nature and culture are intimately and intrinsically part of outdoor spaces, of childhoods and of children's play activities – it helped them to map micro details or affective components (such as how stenches, microbes, vermin, parasitic presences, city noise pollution intra-acted and affected how and what they observed) with metanarratives of childhoods. For example, they noted the "vivid, troubling narratives of swarming rats, smearing excrement, and percolating subsurface flows of water, toxins and racialised affects" of children's outdoor play and considered how such are related through "bodily, microgeographical encounters with social-material processes" (ibid:928). In paying attention to these visceral, haunting narratives of children's everyday materialities they were able to better capture or speak to "the structural, political, exclusionary social geographies which are co-constituted in/through them within communities" (ibid). In both these studies (Blaise: 2013; Horton and Kraftl: 2018) the researchers re-analysed previous data sets using diffractive lenses. Their cellular affective accounts of childhoods and gender facilitated a more attentive and detailed description of the connective and constitutive cogs through which social categories are relationally and spatially co-constructed. Diffractive lenses afforded a deeper perspectival range for understanding entangled complexities of social phenomena.

It is important to point out here how the notion of scale is understood in this framework, according to Hollin *et al* (2017:9) the jumping of scales, that is, the assumption that the micro serves as a geometric reading of the macro - is understood as "an *outcome* of on-going worldly processes of production, contestation, and reproduction". For Barad (2007:245) "the micro- or

quantum-scale can always be assumed to be unproblematically 'smaller' than the macro-realm, the local always be assumed to be unproblematically smaller than the global, and so forth". This scalability however can be met with apprehension when applied to social analysis since theorems of quantum physics are not the canonical catalogue social theorists necessarily draw on to explain social phenomena. Concerns over how "levels of abstraction" and "commensurable frames of reference" (Chagani, 2014: 429) might erode disciplinary paradigmatic borders (Maclure, 2015:15) between social and scientific philosophies or how practices of social critique might be implicated in its application - are some of the main plugs for this apprehensiveness. Hollin *et al* (2017:9) however point out that this understanding does not imply that diverse scales are not real, what it does do however, is shift focus from questions of size and shape about social phenomena - that is, from geometrical concerns, to reorienting towards questions of "boundary, connectivity, interiority, and exteriority" or topological concerns.

Diffractive methods therefore also assert a shift from social constructivists accounts, that, as Barad (2003: 802-803) contends, gets "caught up in the geometrical optics of reflection" where language or the discursive is meant to mirror a reality, objectively. Diffraction according to Barad, shifts attention to physical optics by attending to questions of diffraction rather than reflection. A diffractive reading entails "thinking the "social" and the "scientific" together" in ways that are ontologically more illuminating and also agentially realist. Whilst generatively drawing from Barad's theorizations of relationality and scalability, I filter these lenses from an Islamic understanding of these concepts. There are important echoes between the types of questions that quantum physicists like Barad explores, and Islamic metaphysical engagements of the same, that is to understand the nature of physical entities and how they interact (Harding, 1993:166; Moosa, 2015: 182-183) although the epistemological frameworks and ethical commitments between the two might vary. Whilst the academic study of God has routinely been relegated to concerns of philosophy or theology, scientific advances in quantum theory invariably prompts towards "thinking the social and scientific together" in ways that collapses such arbitrary disciplinary boundaries (Harding, 1993:167). Understanding ontological realms and the connectedness and scalability of metaphysical and physical worlds have long been the mainstay of Islamic scholarly engagements. What posthumanist scholars frame as relational or sympoietic systems (Barad: 2003, 2007; Murris *et al*, 2018:7) finds commensurate expression in a number of Islamic ethical registers. For example, contemporary Islamic eco-theories (Foltz *et al*:2003; Gade:2019; Mohamed:2015; Moosa: 2012; Özdemir:2015;

Tlili:2018) consider the relationship between creator-creation (*ḥablun min Allah - ḥablun min al-nās*)[79] as a vertical dimension of relationality that hold certain moral consequences, as well as the relationalities between *makhlūq* (creation) that casts all sentient and nonsentient, or human and more-than-human entities on a horizontal relational scale of moral accountability.

This premise gives rise to a number of Islamic ethical responses from which relationality is understood. For one it does not assume a de-centring of humans in necessarily the same vein as posited by posthumanism, instead an Islamic eco-theory places humanity at the centre of the system not as an ontological privilege rather as a *mukallaf* (accountable being) – that is, a morally consequential relation within the creator-creation dynamic (Gade, 2019:103-104). So beyond the posthumanist lens of thinking science and social together to explain the relationalities of multi-species lifeworlds as a connected system, an Islamic worldview extends this system as an ordering of consequential relations. Gade (2020)[80] refers to this understanding of relationality as "the scales of ultimate justice" that is being accountable for the ethical commitments one makes or fails to make as part of an ontological ordering of the world.[81]

Diffractive methods are often effectually employed in childhood studies as it is especially attuned to mapping complex relationalities of childhood spaces which routinely include multi-sensory modalities, such as sounds and silences or the aural tectonics of childhoods, and the

[79] Q. 3:112 "bound by a covenant from Allah and a covenant from the people"

[80] Article entitled *Scales of Justice for Environmental Ethics* by Anna Gade, uploaded 24 November 2020 https://tif.ssrc.org/2020/11/23/scales-of-justice-for-environmental-ethics/ (accessed 27 November 2020).

[81] Some Muslim scholars have also interpreted the creator-creation dynamic in anthropocentric ways that cast humans as not only as exceptional but also as preferred above all other forms of creation (Tlili, 2018:15). Some Islamic feminist engagements too have applied anthropocentric lenses to explain gender/sex binaries and ontological relationalities in problematic ways that reinforce patriarchal hierarchical conceptions. For example, in Sachiko Murata's (1992) "Tao of Islam" she notes that the *microcosm is the human individual. Everything in the macrocosm [cosmos] is reflected in the microcosm. And both microcosm and macrocosm manifest the Metacosm [God]. This is the law of correspondence. The goal of the seeker is to integrate the three realities, to 'make them one' (tawhid)* and she uses this framing to interpret gendered relationalities through the Yang (active) and Yin (receptive) metaphor. However as Shaikh (2012: 203-204) argues, this lens is limited and limiting by particular social and historical ontological realities which reifies gender constructs instead of opening up the margins of fluidity for thinking about cosmological scales and creator-creation relationalities. This fluidity collapses arrogant notions of human exceptionalism or preference premised on human-centred limitations of gender. Such anthropocentric understandings of creator-creation relationalities are similarly contested by many Islamic eco-ethicists as it proffers multiple claims of (unwarranted) entitlements based on the assumption that humans (invariably code for adult male) hold a position of dominion. This framing opens the way for legitimating (as part of a faith imperative) the types of capitalist extractive economies that portents the current climate crisis, the over-production and wasteful consumption of food and other natural resources, it fails to account for animal and plant/marine-life abuses or exploitative industry labour practices. It affects how bio-medical issues are understood and how critical questions of population control, reproductive health and other related factors are engaged. Framing multi-species relationalities as morally consequential translates ontological scales as one of accountability and responsibility rather than preference. Each of these issues are entangled with broader discourses of gender in Islam, therefore scalability provides an important lens for analysing the cosmological and ontological relationalities of Muslim childhoods.

affective, olfactory and aesthetical components of pedagogical enactments (Hickey-Moody: 2013; Knight: 2016; Osgood and Giugni: 2015; Taguchi: 2017; Murris *et al*: 2018, Magnusson; 2020). As a creatively generative and experimental research practice, diffractive methods include using various mediums or heuristic tools such as images, sound recordings, computing, drawings, movement, videography, performance and other tactile artifacts that can help capture different registers of children's material-discursive encounters. A diffractive framework therefore opens up imaginative ways to "figure gender as multiplicities of vibrant matter, emotions, encounters, relationships and happenings that are uncertain, shifting and contingent" and creates opportunities to "think differently about children and childhoods lived" (Osgood and Giugni, 2015: 350- 357).

Diffractive techniques also rely on using neologisms such as *materialdiscursive*, *natureculture*, *humananimal* as part of a relational ontology syntax. For example, Murris and Kohan (2020) use the term *transindividual* as a way of politically reading the present through the past using concepts of time, childhood and school. Braidotti (2018:10) uses terms such as "medianatures", "humancity" and "technicity" as a way of mapping ecologies where technology, geography and humans transmute. Barad (2003; 2007) uses the oblique slanting line or the / (slash symbol) to verbally communicate how "cutting together apart"[82] operates, such as in/determinate; in/human; non/existent; im/possible; no/thing and so forth. Such phraseologies are therefore not merely lexical semantics rather they perform important compositional and conceptual labours as part of diffractive methods to map relationalities between two or more entities. Correspondingly, Islamic registers often rely on symbol, allegory and metaphor to map a continuum between the moral, spiritual, material and imaginary dimensions, or as way of expressing the subtleties of ontological connections between the seen/apparent (*ẓāhir*) and the unseen/ imperceptible (*bāṭin*). Ideations called *amthāl* (similitudes) *ishārah* (significations) provide rhetorical modes that help convey multiple agentive relationalities within the creator-creation dynamic (Gade, 2019: 162-167).

In diffractively analysing Muslim childhoods, gender and the madrasah space, I reiterate that the onto-epistemological lenses I apply draws generously but also selectively on the insights afforded through posthumanist frameworks. As Sellberg and Hinton (2016) importantly point out, whenever diffractive readings encounter different traditions they are reformulated, this is part of the transformative nature of a diffractive critical encounter. Diffractive readings are

[82] Interview with Karen Barad in Dolphijn and van der Tuin (2012:53).

therefore neither an "automatic agreement nor repetition of received interpretation" of [Barad's] conceptual lexicon (ibid). To re-state, my application of this methodology, my ethical commitments and referential worldview including the suppositions I make - are distilled through an "Islamic" filter in conversation with a posthumanist one.[83] In doing so, I offer an application of diffractive methods from a perspective that has, from my review of the field, not yet been engaged from in any meaningful way. As such, I am not only treading new ground, but encountering phenomena in an authentically faithful way and opening up vistas of childhood being and becomings that are not fixed to posthumanist ideals but uses its insights and methods judiciously to help me map how the madrasah space is gendered. The following subset of questions help channel my research processes more purposefully. How is gender, as a material-discursive social phenomena mapped within the pedagogical spaces of the madrasah? What forms of entanglements and intra-actions co-emerge within these spaces? How can a diffractive reading of Muslim childhoods and the madrasah space help foster an epistemic shift for how gender is understood and practiced as part of an Islamic pedagogical and ethical imperative? How can an Islamic diffractive lens contribute towards deepening current empathies of relational ontologies and childhood gendered pedagogies that fall outside of posthumanists' frameworks and its claimed ethical commitments?

4.2. Locating the field: mappings of *madāris* in South Africa

The "data" I use to diffractively analyse Muslim childhoods and *madāris* in South Africa has mainly been co-generated from fieldwork studies conducted at four madrasah sites located in different communities around Cape Town in the Western Cape. These observational studies were carried out over the first term of the South African schooling/madrasah calendar year from February to May in 2018. My choices in selecting madrasah sites to conduct observational studies were informed by an array of considerations. Firstly, I was well-positioned as a madrasah educator myself and having studied with and subsequently also lectured at an Islamic tertiary institution based in Cape Town where many of the staff, students and affiliates served in various capacities at *madāris* in the Western Cape. This location afforded me access to a wide network of practitioners, educators and administrators of madrasahs in and around the Cape Town region. Moreover, the fact that the Western Cape has a sizeable concentration of

[83] In making this distinction I restate here a point already clarified in chapter two of this thesis. Posthumanist ontologies presupposes a commitment to a set of ethical values and truth/scientific claims about reality by default also about humanity. Whilst there are much consistencies herein with my own positioning, hence my adoption of the framework, I also make clear how and why I find some aspects to be incongruent with my own research aims and therefore frame my diffractive analysis through an Islamic lens rather than a posthumanist one.

the South African Muslim populace[84], and that spatially the Cape bears many nascent footprints of Islam, Muslims and *madāris* presences in SA. As such, the Cape provides a richly textured historical and contemporary urban tapestry of Islamic pedagogical spaces from which to map multiple Muslim childhood entanglements.

In addition to these deliberations, I also took into consideration the varying forms of *madāris* available to contemporary Muslim children in SA generally. Although there are no official statistics that track the increasingly eclectic ways madrasah education is currently offered across SA, the landscape can generally be appraised using independent national databases that map Islamic institutions or *masājid* more broadly. Islamic schools and formal *madāris* affiliated to Islamic institutions and/or charitable organizations, as well as *jamāt khannas* or *musallas* (informal prayer spaces) often offer madrasah classes although such are not always listed as on the available databases.[85] Some Muslim institutional websites may also list *madāris* as part of the community services they offer, these are useful indicators for geographically mapping the specificities of the South African madrasah landscape. For example, the Jamiatul Ulama Council of South Africa (Council of Muslim Theologians) are prolific purveyors of madrasah education in SA, especially within the Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal and the Northern and Eastern Cape regions where the South African "Deobandi" ideological bases are mainly concentrated.[86] As a well-resourced religious institution, the *jamiat's* Taalimi Board (educational affairs) facilitates over 15,000 children attending various *madāris* across the country. This body oversees the construction and development of new *madāris*, training of madrasah teachers, formulating curricula, printing and publishing of madrasah texts or *kitābs* as well officiating and supervising over the general organisational structures of *madāris* that fall under its auspices. Correspondingly, "Imaadiya" madāris,[87] like many other similar Islamic

[84] Based on 2016 national statistical survey results on South African households, Muslims make up about 2,2 % of the general population, from that 7,4 % are located in the Western Cape, followed by Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal province (Community Survey 2016 in Brief, Report 02-01-06, pg40) http://www.statssa.gov.za/?s=religion (accessed 21 August 2020). Although there are important variations in how national census might document religious affiliations and how religious identities are constructed or claimed in reality, these demographic estimations help to broadly contextualize the overall landscape of Muslim communities wherein I locate my research study.

[85] The online app *South African Muslim Directory* lists 782 *masājid;* 222 Islamic educational centres; and 271 Islamic charitable organizations that provide madrasah in South Africa. http://www.samd.co.za/tablemasjid.php (accessed 25 August 2020).

[86] Deobandi refers to a theological school the *Darul 'Ulūm* seminary that was established in 1867 in Deoband, India. It serves as the headquarters for the training and certification body for Deoband clerics globally. In South Africa a number of auxiliary Deoband institutes has been established since early 1970s which serves as a network for employing Deoband scholars and teachers at various masājid and madāris.

[87] *Imaadiyah* madāris are established by Al-Imdaad Foundation, a South African non-profit humanitarian aid relief organisation (NGO). https://www.alimdaad.com/content/projectdetails.jsf?id=377 (accessed 2 July 2020).

charitable iterations, have operations spread across much of Africa generally, mostly in impoverished and/or rural communities as part of their charitable relief mission. Such missionary *madāris* usually serve 1000s of children with meals, stationary, seasonal clothing, personal hygiene packs as well as offer mentoring and medical services as part of their madrasah programmes. These operations often rely on both public and private donor funds, so their activities are usually promoted using local and international Muslim media platforms. Many Muslims channel their charity and *zakāt* (compulsory alms) towards the establishment and maintenance of such madrasah projects.

In the Western Cape, the main organisational body is the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) which has affiliations with local Islamic primary and high schools, as well as a number of *ḥifẓ* (Qur'an memorization) schools.[88] The MJC however does not serve as a regulatory body for *madāris* in the Western Cape, so *madāris* in this region are mostly independently run and the organizational structures, curricula and theological and/or ideological expressions often varies at different institutions. Some *madāris* that are not aligned to dominant theological strands or that may service specific community needs form yet another tributary layer within the South African madrasah landscape. The Shi'ah community in SA, for example, have a network of *muballigheen* (propagation workers) that help facilitate and teach at various Shi'ah *madāris* throughout the country. The Ahl Bait Foundation (AFOSA) provides *tarbiyyah* (educational) programmes through training camps and daily or weekly children's madrasah classes and is responsible for developing the national syllabus used in their affiliate madāris.[89] Similarly, there are various global networks of *tariqas* (Sufi orders) and mystical communities that diversify the kaleidoscopic landscapes of South African *madāris*. The Al Fitrah Foundation provides safe spaces and educational programmes for queer Muslims in South Africa to learn and practice Islam in non-discriminatory environments.[90] The "Al Waagah Madrassah for the Deaf" in Cape Town, is another example of differing forms of madrasah available to South

[88] The MJC is the largest and main organizational body in the Western Cape that was established in 1945. It serves the Muslim community by offering religious guidance and counselling, providing Islamic education and training, issuing *fatāwa* (religious edicts), conducting *da'wā* (propagation), officiating in Muslim marriages and divorces, certifying *ḥalāl* (permissible) goods and products and other social development projects. _A number of *ḥifẓ* schools including the Al-Azhar Primary and High Schools are affiliated with the MJC. The MJC's educational ethos is based on a "care-giving" service and an "activity-based learning" for young children. https://mjc.org.za/education/schools/al-azhar-cape-town/ (accessed 7 June 2020).

[89] The Ahlul Bait Islamic Centre was established in 1991 in Cape Town, with affiliated *jamāts* (congregations) across the country https://afosa.org/ahlul-bait-in-south-africa/ (accessed 9 September 2020).

[90]Although not operational as a children's madrasah Al Fitrah offers "Training the Trainer" and other leadership development programmes that help facilitate and channel its inclusive queer-friendly ethos into various community structures. https://www.al-fitrah.org.za/index.html (accessed 9 September 2020).

African Muslims that provides weekend morning madrasah classes to over 200 deaf or hard of hearing children and adult learners, and also provides sign language interpreter services for *masjid* programmes.[91] Similarly, Madrassa An-Noor was established in 1986 in KwaZulu Natal for young blind childen that includes a *taḥfīẓ* (Qur'an memorization) program. The facility has its own recording studio that develops "talking books" madrasah curricula and other Islamic literary works in audio format, as well its own technology lab to produce madrasah resources in braille. The madrasah includes a higher learning seminary or *Darul 'Ulūm* for the blind students to train as *imām* and/or madrasah teachers, it also has an outreach program that arranges Qur'an braille workshops globally as well locally.[92]

Muslim institutional tracking metiers or online databases do not necessarily provide an accurate mapping of *all* madrasah activities in SA. Such databases tend to exclude home-based madrasah classes since these forms of *madāris* often operate independently or informally outside of any institutional affiliations. From individual online presences and social media profiles it would appear that many home-based or independent *madāris* are initiated by parent or other socio-religious groups. These types of *madāris* indicate a burgeoning trend towards a more creative, child-centred and flexible form of madrasah instruction and interaction, one that responds to and caters for contemporary household's work/schooling scheduling pressures. These types of *madāris* usually operate as individual or small group weekly or weekend classes.

Additionally, the South African madrasah landscape includes virtual pedagogical spaces where Muslim children learn Islam as part of a global community. A proliferation of digital resources that cater specifically to Muslim children's Islamic teaching and learning activities is suggestive of how media and technology provide alternative avenues for contemporary madrasah activities.[93] Such online presences re-configure spatialities and modes of traditional madrasah pedagogy. From a general scoping of madrasah online presences, it would appear

[91] Al-Waagah Islamic Institute for the Deaf was established in July 1995, prior to that were no organised form of madrasah for deaf Muslim children https://alwaagahislamicinstituteforthedeaf.wordpress.com/about/ (accessed 9 September 2020)

[92] The madrasah offers online classes globally using smartphone and analogue mobile devices to teach blind students in Braille in a range of language options https://www.mnblind.org/ (accessed 22 September 2020).

[93] For example, the *Fons Vitae Ghazali Children's Project* was launched in SA in 2018. The project is based on 12th century Islamic scholar Al-Ghazali's magnum opus, "The Revival of the Religious Sciences" a compendium of Islamic spirituality and ethical behaviour. The Ghazali Children's Project has adapted this work into an educational package and re-crafted it as a resource for families and schools. Online resources include children's documentary films, workbooks, Islamic fictional literature, interactive projects, activities and online contests. A documentary film about the 2018 SA launch was posted on *The Fons Vitae Ghazali Children's Project* YouTube Channel on 28 August 2019 which features a number of prominent South African Muslim leaders, teachers and parents endorsing and promoting the project. https://youtu.be/VoPO7ywQTYk (viewed 12 September 2020).

that following the social-distancing protocols and national lockdown in 2020 due to the global Covid19 pandemic, a number of *madāris* in SA have had to adopt digital modes and provide virtual madrasah spaces as well. This shift to digital madrasah space signals an important pedagogical modification, that, even if only a transitory mode, holds a number of socio-material considerations as to how such spaces are rendered in/accessible for South African Muslim children and families given existing socio-economic disparities.

Overall, what these indicators suggest is that *madāris* are not only widely mapped across the South African geographical and virtual landscapes but that it does so in significantly varied formations both spatially and discursively. Given the variabilities of madrasah spaces in SA, my intention in selecting specific sites was mainly informed by incorporating a broad set of differing physical spaces rather than representational forms of a *typical* South African madrasah. A key consideration therefore in selecting madrasah sites was an emphasis on mapping different spatialities, since relationality and materiality of Muslim childhoods provided the overarching themes and motivation of my research study. Therefore, I focused specifically on madrasah sites that offered variable locational and spatial dynamics.

4.3. Selecting Madrasah Sites, Applying a Gendered Gaze

After identifying a random list of possibilities from which to conduct my observational study, and following the required faculty protocols for research ethics[94] - during the latter part of 2017, I made initial contact with the administrators and/or principals of eight potential sites, explaining the purpose, duration and nature of my study. During these initial contact meetings, the times and days I planned be present, the nature and extent of my interactions/contact with the children/ teachers on site and the types of recording/ documenting devices were discussed. The consent and informational forms presented to participants listed these details as well. Parenthetically, I opted *not* use any audio/visual recording devices to prevent distraction. The premise was not to be as unobtrusive as possible, or to be "fly on the wall" as it were, since that scenario is hardly possible in a children's classroom learning situation. Rather my presence as an observer was acknowledged as an *interference* to the normative patterns of the madrasah spaces, and that interference provided an important diffractive lens as part of my methodological approach.[95] My field notes and further off-site reflexive notes provided the

[94] Ethical Clearance approved on 19 October 2017 by Department of Religious Studies Ethics Committee.
[95] The framing of my methodological approach as "diffractive" is something that developed organically over the course of my research process. Also it was considered counterintuitive to specify the gendered focus of my study to my research participants, as that would inadvertently influence the choreographies of the spaces I intended to

main recording apparatus I used at each of the madrasah sites.[96] The administrators had a period before the start of study in 2018 when they undertook to get informed consent from parents as well as from the madrasah teaching staff about my intended study (this only if they deemed such to be necessary, I followed the administrators guidance herein and did not intrude upon the internal protocols they chose to follow). This provided sufficient time for each participating madrasah to raise any concerns or ask further questions about the proposed study.

From the eight sites selected, my interactions with administrators from three of the *madāris* did not go beyond the initial introduction. For varying reasons, they either declined to participate at the onset, or simply did not show up to our pre-arranged meeting. Therefore I did not pursue those options any further.[97] The fourth site I identified, was located in an especially disadvantaged township community, the principal and religious leader of this particular madrasah was someone I knew from previous engagements. Being familiar with the specific forms of challenges that community and the madrasah faces, generally, I understood the precarious dynamics of that space. Many of the children that do attend the madrasah, do so because it offers a safe after school space with a meal option not readily available to them otherwise. Many of the children are not Muslim, so madrasah classes are not always regularly offered. After arriving a few times in the first two weeks in February 2018 and having been met with no classes taking place nor any children present, it was mutually agreed that it would be advisable to discontinue with the proposed study set-up. I have however, remained in contact with the madrasah for different projects, these subsidiary intra-actions offered important lateral pathways for understanding Muslim childhoods and *madāris* in SA, and therefore such data features latently, if not specifically throughout this thesis.

The four madrasah sites that *have* been included as part of my observational study are detailed hereunder using approximate identification markers. In doing so I acknowledge the saliency of finding a principled balance between protecting the identities of the participants of my study while at the same time allowing me the necessary bandwidth to speak to and about the

observe. Gender was therefore included as part of a broad range of issues related to *tarbiyyah* or Islamic pedagogies within madrasah spaces.

[96] On a few occasions I used my mobile phone camera (with permission) to capture details for my own reference, such as class time-tables, onsite person's contact details and information about the architectural details of the space and textual resources children/teachers used.

[97] My personal sense was that these madāris were especially conservative and guarded in their ideological positioning and did not welcome (or did not trust) being researched by a secular institute, and the fact that I was a Muslim did not alter that perception. Of course this is a very subjective reading of their decision, since none of them offered any reasons for not wanting to participate.

materialities of the spaces I analyse. Without referring to specific names of persons or the madrasah itself, I do however mention related socio-spatial details since these are central the analytical methods I apply. Much care has been taken in this regard to remain respectful and authentic to both the participants as well as maintain analytical honesty and rigour. The spatio-historical details of each site are threaded through my research narrative as part of the provocations I raise, however at this point. I will briefly introduce each madrasah site to help locate and differentiate between the four spaces.[98]

1) **Madrasah A**: I identify madrasah A as a *school* madrasah. This madrasah is located in the Kensington-Factreton-Maitland suburb (a tripartite naming that is discussed elsewhere); the madrasah uses the premises of a public high school as a subsidised shared space after regular schooling hours. A quadrant block with toilet facilities is allocated for madrasah usage with rental cost paid to the school. The madrasah classes have been operating in since 2009. The classes are divided according to three learning phases, foundation, intermediate and seniors. There are total of 72 children (aged between 4 -16 years old), 8 teachers that include teacher assistants, 3 administrative staff and 3 executive board members including the principal (who were usually present). The madrasah fees are R150 a month per child or R1800 per annum, with concessions made for two or more siblings and exemptions for financially strained families. The madrasah operates twice a week Mondays and Tuesdays between 16h00-18h00 (during the first term).
2) **Madrasah B:** I identify madrasah B as a *township* madrasah. The madrasah is located on the Cape Flats in an informal settlement area or township (peripheral or underdeveloped urban space) that rests along the dunes of a conservational wetlands area. The madrasah comprises of both a built up (bricks and mortar) as well as prefabricated structures and serves as the local masjid as well. It was established in early 2000s with the support of donors and is run by the director or *imām* who is also the only madrasah teacher. There are 133 children (age groups range from 3 years - 18 years old) that attend the madrasah classes which are offered Monday – Sundays at varying times. There are no fees charged and the madrasah offers a daily feeding programme for the children.

[98] All details as provided to me by the administrators of each madrasah at the time the study was conducted between February–May 2018.

3) **Madrasah C**: I identify madrasah C as an *institutional* madrasah. This madrasah is located in the suburb of Athlone and forms part of a well -resourced organizational complex established in the early 1980s that includes a masjid, a library, an auditorium, an onsite commercial enterprise, feeding scheme kitchen and number of ablution facilities. There are 10 classes that range from grades R to forms 1 to 8 (age groups range from 5 to 18 years old) , there are 10 teaching staff members that include subject specialists, 2 administrative staff that is the principal and secretary. The madrasah operates under the directorship of an executive board, who are responsible for all major decisions including developing the madrasah curricula. The total number of children enrolled is 159 and classes are held Monday – Thursdays between 15h45-17h45. The fees are R400 per term or R1600 per annum. The madrasah produces and publishes its own textbooks and workbooks for each class level, and these are purchased by the learners.
4) **Madrasah D**: I identify madrasah D as a *masjid* madrasah. Classes are held inside a masjid that is located in the former inner city residential area of District Six. The masjid was established in the late 1800s and has survived the forced removals of the 1960s apartheid policies and is at the heart of some of the country's ongoing land restitution debates (discussed later). The principal of the madrasah has served as the *imām* of the masjid for over two decades. There are around 110 children that attend the madrasah in total although at separate times and on different days. There are classes offered Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, as well as a Saturday morning class. The class groups are divided between elementary and intermediate phases their ages range from 5 years to 16 years old. The fee structure, teaching and admin staff are all the same as madrasah A since both are affiliated and often conduct extra-curricular programmes such as field trips and fundraisers jointly.

During the first term of the 2018 madrasah calendar year[99] I visited each of these four sites to observe the spatialities and pedagogies of Muslim childhoods in order to determine how madrasah spaces were gendered. I spent approximately 2 hours per a day, between 16h00-18h00, Mondays to Thursdays at each site on alternating days. In some instances my

[99] Most madāris in South Africa follow local provincial schooling terms as a guideline, the Western Cape Education department's schooling as well madrasah calendar for term one in 2018 ran between 17 January – 28 March, and the second term 10 April- 22 June. My study was conducted from the first week in February 2018 and concluded before the start of Ramadan (Islamic month of fasting) in the second week of May 2018.

engagements extended beyond that time-frame or occurred outside of the physical madrassah spaces. My interactions with the children, administrator/s and teacher/s at each madrasah mostly followed a similar daily pattern. I spent time with different classes or groups of children during the four month period. At each visit, I would register my presence at the administrator's office (or what served as such where there were no physical office space) and would be directed to a particular classroom/space. This, so that I would not disrupt the normative choreographies of classes and could have time observing the full range of activities that occurred in that space. For the most part I joined only once classes were already started, I usually sat at the back or to the side on the floor and observed, and only interacted with teachers and/or children if they initiated such. I observed the children as they participated in class group activities, and when they changed classes or moved to different locations such as for prayer times as well as during class breaks and or snack/play time, where applicable. On the final day of my stint at each madrasah I had the opportunity to engage the children in informal group discussions.

My analysis is arranged as a non-sequential mapping of diffractive patterns - which I refer to as *provocations.*[100] Diffractive readings, according Barad "bring inventive provocations; they are good to think with. They are respectful, detailed, ethical engagements" (Dolphijn and van der Tuin, 2012: 70; Magnusson, 2020: 3). Holding these considerations in mind, the modalities I use to *think with* and to map gendered patterns - include using a series of images as a visual mapping aid,[101] as well as drawing on reflexive field notes or my research narrative as a provocation contrivance for steering my *thinking with* and *thinking through* processes. Barad's elaboration of agential cuts are recapped here, they contend that *phenomena do not merely mark the epistemological inseparability of "observer" and "observed"* (2003:815-816) in other words, subject-object boundaries are considered arbitrary markers of distance. In this

[100] I was introduced to the concept of provocation as a diffractive research technique at the Decolonising Childhood Pedagogies workshops (mentioned in chapter two of this thesis). Provocations are used as a tool for diffracting conversations, it intimates an opening line or a nudging towards flights of multiple entangled thought possibilities. Provocations are intended to land on unsteady or fluid planes of thought potentialities. It is at once is a way of holding related ideas together for meaningful discussion and focused analysis, yet also keeping it flexible enough so as not to obscure or interfere with the messiness that the notions of diffraction and entanglement are intended to convey.

[101] To clarify, images I use are not intended as a visual representation of my subjects. Images are digital pixels that depict a moment captured in a time bound capsule, they are therefore phenomena diffracted through intra-actions that include the photographer, the camera as apparatus, the photographed objects/entities, the agentive acts of editing, manipulating, uploading, viewing and so forth – these are not neutral or value free actions. Every photograph involves particular decisions of what, and in what way, to take notice of what is going on, it is a manipulated decision to gaze *somewhere* (Pacini-Ketchabaw *et al*, 2014: 35). In other words, images do not mirror a reality objectively, rather they help capture a set of relational ontologies – they are co-created by a multiple intra-actions - it is in this sense that I use images as part of my diffractive reading.

diffractive method, detachment tools or notions of objectivity are *displaced* and not *replaced* (Chagani, 2014:430). Agential realism not only eschews the notion of a "neutral conveyer of information" (Hollin *et al:* 2017: 14), it also entails an ethics of research practices by "accounting for how practices matter" (Barad.2007:90). Agential cuts (choices of inclusion and exclusion) involves acknowledging how material-discursive processes enables or limits informational access and perspectival range, it includes taking into account how my objectives, anxieties, biases, expectations, assumptions and other subjectivities filter my own ways of seeing or even failures to see, as well as acknowledging how these choices instantiates the phenomena I am presenting. My research narrative is, in this sense, not just an accompanying commentary to my analysis but an essential part of how and what answers I find to my research questions.

In the next chapter I present my observational analysis of the four madrasah spaces selected for my research study.

Chapter Five

Storying Muslim Childhoods Spatialities: A Provocation of Roads and Walls

When a barrier becomes an established feature of the geopolitical landscape it often offers a rallying point for unresolved tensions, becoming a suppurating wound causing perpetual irritation.[102]

(Fig 3)

The cover page of the 2019, May 13th issue of Time magazine featured an evocative topographical image (figure 3) of a South African road captured by photographer Johnny Miller with the headline "the world's most unequal country".[103] The image, according to Miller, illustrates how South African neighbourhoods and suburbs participate in economies and ecologies that both create and reinforce inequalities. The road in this pictorial narrative separates the dilapidations and messiness of poverty from the wealth that is fenced off, bounded, neat and protected. Capturing how SA's history of difference, apart-ness and unequal division is inscribed into its urban spaces, this photographic image not only displays the scars of inequalities, but also evokes a sense of collective complicity.

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[102] Extract from an article in Politico Magazine entitled *The World is full of Walls that Don't Work* by Michael Dear, posted online on 16 August 2016 https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/08/donald-trump-2016-wall-wont-work-214167 (accessed 14 September 2020).

[103] Image used with permission by photographer Johnny Miller https://unequalscenes.com/south-africa (accessed 14 September 2020).

By viewing the image one is not only observing space but also relationally participating in the creation of that ontological world. The topographical image meshes the illusions of a distant gaze with a stark visual confrontation of a reality hard to ignore because it is an integral affective part of the South African lived experience. The road in this optical exchange draws the viewer's gaze towards lines of inquiry into liminal spaces of geographical landscapes and spatial complexities, to the co-constitutive processes of social phenomena and the connectedness of ontological worlds. This narrative of spatial encounters, the mapping of multiple agential participants in the ecologies of space and related ontologies frame my research approach and analyses.

Using provocations as a diffractive tool to think *with* and *about* the gendered spatialities and relational ontologies of Muslim childhoods, I appropriate Nxumalo and Cedillo's (2017: 100) phrase "storying of places" to frame the provocations I raise in this chapter. Storying, they note, regards human as well as more-than-human bodies, place-specific stories, ontologies, histories as active entangled participants in the shaping of place. My diffractive storying of South African madrasah spaces is principally a gendering one, involving thinking of childhoods and gender stories together with or as ontologically relational to the histories, geographies, ecologies, materialities and discursive politics of the places wherein the *madāris* of my study are situated. The four madrasah sites of my study are: *Madrasah A* located in a public high school in the Kensington-Factreton-Maitland neighbourhood; *Madrasah B* is a semi-structured space located in an informal township on the Cape Flats; *Madrasah C* is a formal or institutionalised madrasah space located in a predominantly Muslim suburb also on the Cape Flats; and *Madrasah D* located within a masjid space in Cape Town city's District Six. I consider the historical, social, material, political and discursive entanglements of each space as storying the spatialities of *madāris* in nuancedly gendered ways.

A recurring observation that stood out from my fieldwork research experiences is the persistent ways that roads and walls featured as prominent diffractive actants. I noted how the physicality of roads, walls, barriers or divisions affected, in very determinate ways, how I encountered and navigated each place and space and impacted my observational journey to and from, as well as within each madrasah site. These material features (roads, barriers, walls, fences, gates and so forth) thus prompted a series of reflections about how the geographies and other material-discursive relationalities of Muslim childhoods storied the spatialities of *madāris* in particular ways. Roads and walls are important storytellers that convey messages of access, visibility,

mobility, of past journeys and present realities. Roads and walls are not intended to tell *the* story of Muslim childhoods and gender in the South African madrasah space, rather they offer a perspective from which to understand how material-discursive-affective factors intra-act and participate in the storying of *madāris* spaces. The provocations I raise are intended to do the following: firstly to document my observations of how roads and walls story my research sites, I do this by paying attention to the material-discursive-affective components of my research processes, and by spreading the perspectival range to include a discussion on the historical, geographical, ecological and pedagogical aspects of Muslim childhoods and the madrasah space. Secondly, I cast a critical gaze on gendered patterns that co-emerge from my intra-actions with the madrasah spaces. The spatialities of the four *madāris* are non-sequentially presented hereunder weaving the historical, geographical, political, pedagogical and also gendered material-discursive-affective entanglements of each space.

5.1: Voortrekker Road: vestiges of a community in flux[104]

My commute to and access within *Madrasah A* space involved navigating through a commercial district along a bustling arterial road that spanned three interlinked suburbs of Kensington, Factreton and Maitland. Accessing the madrasah space that was located within a public high school required me to drive through a residential area notorious for crime and gang related violence that was situated just off the busy main road. I entered the school premises by passing through a security checkpoint by a guard stationed at the entrance who would open the large steel boom gates to allow me to enter the space. Once inside the school premises, I had to pass several blocks of newly built state-of-the art classrooms, science laboratories and bathroom facilities to get to the quadrant where the madrasah classes were held. All the windows and doors of the school building were heavily securitised with steel barriers, and the imposing high double-story walls and floors in a monotone shade of grey concrete contributed to the sombre aesthetics of the space. Although some doors and wall signage were painted in red, the ambience of the space felt highly restrictive, clinically high-tech, almost militarised. The madrasah children occupied several of the classrooms, with one of the classrooms used as a make-shift madrasah office space. In each of the classes I visited, the spaces were arranged with the artifacts of the day's schooling activities left by the high school learners, such as

[104] This description is borrowed from the online photographic portfolio of Retha Ferguson, her Visual History study documents microhistories and informal business praxis along the Voortrekker Road Corridor, Cape Town https://rethaferguson.com/portfolio/personal-work/voortrekker-road/ (accessed 19 September 2020)

white/chalk boards at the front of each classroom that still had school lessons written across, the teachers' desks were piled with learners workbooks, the walls had various visual media of school subject content, interspersed with random graffiti markings, the adult sized desks and chairs were closely arranged to accommodate about 60 high-school learners in multiple rows. The classroom space allowed for little "child-friendly" mobility, so the children's movements and the madrasah activities, I noted, were constantly adapted around the remnants of the high school occupants of the space.

The materialities of the school/madrasah space impelled a spectrum of provocations about how Muslim childhoods in this area are affected by, and also how *madāris* respond to related socio-economic issues of safety and security, government investments in educational infrastructure and other childhood spaces, as well as notions of community and communal place-belongings in the life-worlds of Muslim children. As part of the storying of the spatialities of Madrasah A, I paid careful attention to the ways that roads, the school building, its high walls and other related material-discursive factors intra-acted with the children and how such entanglements shaped the pedagogical choreographies of the madrasah space.

Interposing the material artefacts of the built environment are the political histories that inform and shape the geographical vitalities of the school/madrasah space. Within the context of Madrasah A, the tripartite zoning and naming of the Kensington-Factreton-Maitland suburb is one that is etched in the messiness of its past racialized spatial politics. This historical inscription speaks to specific forms of religious identities, kinships and communities that emerged from precariously constructed urban spatialities of apartheid, the effects of which continue to temper how community spaces such as schools and *madāris* are utilized post-apartheid. This area was formerly known as Windermere, which in pre-apartheid South Africa was considered a multi-cultural or racially and ethnically mixed area. The main road named Voortrekker Road which runs parallel to a railway line, was constructed in 1938 in preparation of the centennial celebrations of the Great Trek, an historical mass movement of white settlers from the Cape seeking further indigenous acreage to arrogate within the interior regions of the land.[105] Voortrekker Road connects the city's metro to the northern and eastern suburbs.

[105] The term Voortrekker is a colonialist artefact that continues to be problematically mapped onto many post-apartheid public spaces. Voortrekkers (pioneers) refers to the colonial Dutch men, women and children, mainly pastoral farming families of Afrikaner nationalism folklore called Boers (farmers) that sort independence from British colonists of the Cape through mass movement inland called the Groot Trek between1835-1846. A deeply contested violating historical movement that marked Boer seizure of indigenous land, a claim that was premised on, and continues to be claimed upon, a colonial myth of South Africa as an empty or vacant land. South African

During the 1920s the Windermere area served as a farming zone, an industrial and shipping zone for local textile factories, an abattoir and meat packing zone (built in 1914), a cemetery (constructed 1888 as a burial space for elite whites from the city) and it included a number of informal dwellings occupied by families from different racial and ethnic groups that lived, worked and socialised in the area (Field: 1990, 1998; Brown-Luthango: 2019). The community consisted mainly of former slaves and migrant workers who lived in squalor slum conditions and provided the city with a low-wage work force. This indeterminate agricultural-industrial-squatter/shanty-residential character of the area remained ill-defined particularly following the implementation of one the South African government's key apartheid instrument, the Group Areas Act of 1950[106] - that forcibly removed black and coloured communities from the city's metro areas to the Cape Flats.

As part of the apartheid government's social engineering schema; that coincided with the 1950 construction of the city's first major national highway the N1, an important landmark that was a prescient for the Afrikaner Nationalist government's plans of developing a modern capitalist economy based on extractive and exploitative use of arrogated land and human labour resources - the construction of the N1 highway also meant the destruction of the Windermere community. The surrounding areas of the N1 highway were divided and parts of Windermere were re-zoned and re-named separately as Kensington, Factreton and Maitland. By relocating the black African residents to a different area, and by building low cost housing for coloured residents- the suburb of Kensington was "created" as a lower to middle class "model coloured village" (Fields, 1998: 230; Brown-Luthango, 2019:14) whilst Factreton served as a poorer working class area made up mostly of *afdakkies* or informal backyard shanty structures with very little access to municipal amenities (Field, 1990:59). Apartheid laws divided areas and separated communities in ways that instantiated racialized group identities that spatially mapped their sense of communal belongings based on those racial divisions. Field (1998: 227-228) notes the precarity between the types of identities and communities that apartheid attempted to construct which relied on ethnic absolutisms and the lived realities of a mixed community that was pre-apartheid Windermere. Like the newly constructed N1 highway, and

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History Online, posted 21 March 2011, last updated 27 August 2019 https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/great-trek-1835-1846 (accessed 19 September 2020).

[106] The Group Areas Act of 1950 established the legal machinery to create group belongings such as White, Native, and Coloured. Groups could be further subdivided on ethnic, linguistic, or cultural grounds. Areas were declared as specific "group areas" and any residents who were not of the specified group were removed, often forcibly. South African History Online, Public History Internship, 19 December 2014, last updated 27 August 2019 https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/group-areas-act-1950 (accessed 16 September 2020).

the naming of the main arterial road after colonialist land arrogation - after 1950 the hybrid identities of the pre-apartheid Windermere community were forced into apartheid identity markers of racial difference and ethnic division. Physiological features and cultural dispositions provided some of the markers of separateness and difference, such as the colour of skin, texture of hair, languages and accents. These markers ensured that "colouredness" was rendered distinct from both the whites and the blacks of that community. However, the opacity of "colouredness" as a racial category constructed through colonial sexual violences and miscegenation created an ambiguous phenotype and an unsettling identity category that was negotiated, claimed and contested in varying associative and dissociative ways.

One of these ways was through the creation of unequal racialized living spaces, which affected the types of amenities and distribution of state resources required for community building such as schools, recreational facilities, spaces of worship and access to economic opportunities. Group areas and communities were differentially prioritised under apartheid. The white-aspiring "model coloured community" of Kensington was therefore slightly better resourced than those that resided in Factreton. In this way, the spatial organising of Kensington-Factreton-Maitland maps the class divisions and hierarchies of coloured identities as a politics of location.

This historical spatial morphology of communal belongings is especially salient for understanding the gendered complexities of South African childhoods. For example, Field (1990, 1998) discusses how the apartheid spatialities of Kensington-Factreton-Maitland community shaped particular forms of racialized religious and gendered identities. He notes that as a low wage working class community, affected by economic struggles for daily survival coupled with the spatial and social disenfranchisements of apartheid instruments, it had an especially demoralising affect that permeated both private and public spaces. He describes the coloured households of the Kensington- Factreton community as *matri-focal* - that is "a specific kinship response to oppression and exclusion" (Field, 1990:66). Women amidst these social dynamics take on the double burden of being low skilled wage earners as well as taking on the unpaid labours of being responsible for the organization and maintenance of the home, seeing to the rent, electricity and groceries, and they also serve as the household's moralising conduit in the face of a demoralising social reality. According to Field (ibid) home, in this sense, is a refuge for the male-head but not the female. It is a relational dynamic where females assume the role of head of households but as a delegated role rather than one that holds any power or authority. In this way, matrifocal differs significantly from matriarchal structures. It is a

particular gendered way of being and organising of family dynamics in response to, as a defence against and in defiance of the coloured/ black colonial experience of sexual violences in the Cape.

Baderoon (2014: 84-88) notes a consistent register that colonisers used to normalise the violation of enslaved and black women's bodies, designating them as "available for sexual access with impunity" presenting them "licentious and animalistic", coupled with the accusation that coloured women were "complicit in their own sexual violation". She describes this as an "ontological shame" that is associated with the embodied sediments of sexual violence and miscegenation. This internalised sense of shame for the descendants of the enslaved significantly affects how notions of morality gets performed and contested within coloured households. Kamies (2018:121-122) for example, refers to the Afrikaans term *ordentlikheid* (decency and respectability) as a characteristically gendered way of being for coloured women. Coloured women, she notes, not only provide the moral compass for their households, but they purposefully imbibed the notion *ordentlikheid* as a response to a sense of shame inscribed onto their creolised bodies through the wounds of enslaved sexual violence during colonial period. She points out how cleaning rituals and keeping an orderly home was one way coloured women challenged their designation by their colonial masters as uncivilised or unrespectable. Coloured women's bodies and their sexualities are vicariously burdened with the threat of dehumanization on the one hand, and the expectation of moral propriety on the other, in both public and intimate spaces. Gender is therefore an especially nuanced phenomena within this historical-geographical-social space as it is mapped through ambivalent and idiomatic patterns.

To understand the madrasah space, particularly within this socio-historical context, it is important to thread how coloured household and family dynamics in this area are further complicated by colonial discourses of religion. Field's (1990; 1998) research on the communal displacements in the Kensington-Factreton-Maitland area documents the specific ways apartheid materially affected and instantiated particularized forms of multiple-identity and ambiguous spatial belongings. Muslims, he noted, would often use their faith as a non-coloured identity marker, by claiming an *eiesoortig* (own kind) identity (Field, 1990: 104-105). Several entangled strands complexifies the politics of claiming an *eiesoortig* or "Malay" identity. Jeppie (1987: 49-50) for example, argued that the term Malay as a coloured sub-category and identity marker was one "invented" by I D Du Plessis, who served as the Commissioner of

Coloured Affairs till 1962, in concert with other dominant instruments of apartheid government to ensure social control through racialized religious ordering. Premised as a way of protecting the interests of the Muslim community, the paltriness of this invented culturally "religious" identity rested on the proposition that *Malay*ness as an origin of a geographical culture was coterminous to the Islamic faith generally. The Malay designation was not only fetishized as being less ill-disciplined, more controllable than the *other* coloured/ black Africans, but it purposefully positioned Muslims as being better within this hierarchy of racial ordering. There were spatial gains and other material benefits afforded to Muslims adopting this ambiguous cultural-religious identity as imagined through I D Du Plessis's classed lenses.

Historical records show that Muslims arrived in the Cape from various places along the South East Asian, Indian and African coastal regions, and the nascent faith community included many indigenous converts and other free blacks (Da Costa and Davids: 2005; Dangor: 1997; Shell: 2006; Waghid: 2011), so the designation Malay for Cape Muslim was not only racially but also geographically specious. Baderoon's (2012; 2014; 2019) astute historical reflections are particularly useful for understanding the calculative labours that the term Malay performed as a colonial organizing crucible that erased the violences of slavery by portraying a picturesque and domesticated view of Islam and Muslim slaves. Malay, she notes, not only served as code for pleasing, skilled, reliable and compliant but importantly as a contrast to the idle and volatile indigenous population, suggestive of complicity with desires of white colonialists (2019: 43). For example, Muslim culture was visibilised through the culinary and tailoring skills of Malays rather than any of their Islamic faith practices. Implicated in this social ordering is that Islam served as an othering filter tied to race, ethnicity and culture, rather than faith.

Muslim childhoods in SA and the social roles of the madrasah space cannot be understood outside of these historical contexts of colonised - racialized community and spatial belongings. In the Kensington-Factreton-Maitland area *smokkies* (informal liquor outlets) and churches hold a disproportionate spatial presence to the number of schools and other social amenities.[107] This history of unequal development and distribution of resources is visibly mapped across most post-apartheid urban cityscapes and features prominently in current Kensington-

[107] In 1952 under the Department of Coloured Education the area did not have any high schools, only primary schools that went up to standard 4 and were mainly organised through local churches, Moravian and other missionary activities. The area had 17 churches despite having a large Muslim population (Field: 1990; 1998). *Madrasah A* was established in 2009, it is however not the only madrasah space in the area, children also attend informal classes offered in private home spaces of *imām s* and teachers as well as at the local *masjid*. Bassier (2014: 100) confirms that prior to the construction of *Masjiedul Mugarram* in Factreton in 1965 madrasah classes were offered informally by *imāms* in the area.

Factreton-Maitland communal restitution discourses. Muslim childhoods are imbricated within, and therefore ontologically relational to, the broader political, environmental and economical processes that shape and inform South African spatial and communal injustices and reparation conversations. Presently, the Kensington-Factreton-Maitland suburb has, as part of the processes of "overcoming the material legacy and infrastructural deficit of apartheid" (Brown-Luthango, 2019: 4) hosted a series of social redress, community retribution and rejuvenation initiatives.[108]

Some of the key issues addressed by these initiatives include responding to community grievances about the lack of proper affordable housing, and the ever increasing numbers of informal settlements in the area contributing to overcrowding, poor health, unsanitary and unsafe living conditions.[109] The lack of basic amenities, high rates of unemployment, drug addiction and alcohol abuse, prevalence of domestic violence, property theft, petty and violent crime related to gangsterisms are notably some of the most pressing issues that create distrust amongst residents, causes breakdown in community relations which results in ineffective communal mobilization efforts to engage local government and access regular policing and other municipal services. Childhoods and youth in the area are particularly affected including inadequate government child-support grants for families, insufficient educational resources to facilitate learning and after school care, lack of safe outdoor recreational spaces for sporting and play activities. Much of the fatalities in the area caused by gang violence are suffered by children caught in the cross-fire, often when walking through unsafe roads to and from schools and madrasah. Children attending schools and *madāris* in the area from other areas on the Cape Flats often rely on public transport and are usually dropped off on Voortrekker road, the main transit route to access the school/madrasah. The pathways children use to get to schools and *madāris* are not pedestrian friendly as most streets in the area have been left in derelict conditions further exposing children to threats of assault and other forms of violence.

As with many other neighbourhoods on the Cape Flats, streets are vibrant communal meeting and play spaces for children's games, corner cafes (referred to as *spaza* or *babbie* shops

[108] One such initiative was a two week Change by Design workshop held in Cape Town in 2017 entitled "A Moment in Kensington- Factreton- Maitland". The information presented here has been retrieved from the summary report of this workshop.

[109] There are some notable economic disparities between the tripartite suburbs, of the three neighbourhoods Factreton is colloquially referred to as 'Die Gat' (the hole) or "Die Do(r)p" (literally the town, but by dropping the r it translates as an alcoholic drink). Council homes in Factreton consist of two-bedroom formal homes that are 45 square metres in size and include informally erected structures around the property to accommodate growing families, with most households having more than twenty members living in them.

typically owned by Indian or other migrant community traders) provide household convenience goods, they however also attract loitering and petty crime from *skollies* (unemployed or insecure wage-earners) and/ or *tik-koppe* (crystal methamphetamine addicts) and gang activity that lay territorial claim to specific streets in the area.[110] Presently, Voortrekker road and its interlinked (previously divided) neighbourhoods form part of the city's spatial and social restructuring framework (Brown-Luthango, 2019:4). This includes developing transit "corridors" to (re) integrate urban development, mobility and other infrastructural investments in communities that have historically been fractured.[111] The discourses around and proposed strategies for social redress have however been slow to materialize and is often mired by the politicking between community concerns, business interests and sluggish governmental processes. As with many other previously disadvantaged neighbourhoods in SA, the weight of historical disenfranchisement in the Kensington-Factreton-Maitland area and the cumulative cyclical socio-economic struggles of the community render it an especially precarious storying of childhood place.

It is in this socio-historical-political context that the materialities of the public high school space wherein Madrasah A is located is expressly pertinent. First established in 1934, the *plankie skool* (prefabricated wooden structure) was moved in 1974 to its current location. It was however only in 2014 that the current state of the art concrete structure was constructed and officially opened by then President Jacob Zuma as part of the government's Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI).[112] The opening of the school was covered in the media amidst much public spectacle and political grandstanding, President Zuma proudly exhibited the school as evidence of government's delivery on its educational mandate to SA's children.[113] Notably, of the 483 new schools built between 2012 and 2020, the largest quota

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[110] The three main rival gangs operating across Kensington, Factreton and Maitland are the *Nice Time Kids*, *Wonder Kids* and the *Americans*. Most members are initiated into rival gangs as children, the claiming of street space and childhoods is therefore a significant aspect of how gang culture affects neighbourhoods and communities. In 2018 the Western Cape Department of Community Safety piloted a "Walking Bus Project" where volunteers from gang-ridden communities provide supervised walking trips to and from school for children https://www.saferspaces.org.za/be-inspired/entry/walking-bus-initiative (accessed 21 December 2020).

[111] The "Voortrekker Road Corridor Integration Zone" is one of three transit corridors that have been identified by the City of Cape Town's 2012 "Spatial Development Framework" that facilitates movement, economic opportunities through trade and development between previously white developed suburbs and those on the Cape Flats (Brown-Luthango: 2019).

[112] The objective of the ASIDI programme is to ensure all schools have basic norms of water, sanitation and electricity and to replace schools constructed from inappropriate material (mud, *plankie* [wood], asbestos) https://www.education.gov.za/Programmes/ASIDI.aspx (accessed 28 August 2020)

[113] Article by Amukelani Chauke, dated October 2014 https://www.vukuzenzele.gov.za/president-makes-kensington-class-act (accessed 21 November 2019) Address of President Zuma posted on the official

(235) were built in the years 2013/4, which coincided with the year national elections were held. In his 2018 State of the Nation Address, President Ramaphosa again flouted the government's ASIDI programme as an educational infrastructure success, but glossed over the fact that the number of ASIDI schools built subsequent to 2014 had significantly declined and that government had failed to meet their school delivery targets.

In a politically contested province such as the Western Cape, and in a climate of widespread allegations of malfeasance, government corruption and abuse of public funds, public sentiments about educational infrastructure are especially vexed since it is one of the key issues upon which the reparations of SA's unequal past has been consistently premised.[114] The post-apartheid rainbow nation promise of "born-free" childhoods have not necessarily translated into material realities for the majority of SA's children. Spatial injustices are multi-layered and structurally interconnected, and religious institutions do not operate outside of these socio-economic conditions. Their functioning is hugely affected by the material and political constraints of locality. These realities bring into sharper focus the ways in which *madāris* contribute to the storying of the spatialities of South African childhoods.

The architectural design of the school building is especially noteworthy since it is presented as a prototype of political will and government's commitment towards the education and safety of SA's children. The school was one of nine designed and built in the province by a leading architectural firm. The high walls and concrete façade that I found to be intimidating and austere looking, is described by the designers as being attuned to the environmental elements of the area, and serves to protect school children from the Cape's south easterly wind storms and the design aesthetic is meant to inspire learning. The building materials used were selected to wear well for future generations and requires less maintenance costs. The school is featured as part of a public portfolio that includes other similar post-apartheid public urban space upgrades. The images show the spaciousness and movements of children within, however these are portrayed in ways that render invisible the realities of the area that story children's movements to and from the school. Instead the Cape's increment weather is presented as the

government website http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/speeches/address-president-jacob-zuma-official-opening-kensington-high-school%2C-cape-town (accessed 21 November 2019).

[114] In August 2018 a Judicial Commission of Inquiry was established to investigate allegations of state capture, corruption and fraud in the public sector including organs of state, at tax-payer's expense which further depletes state resources. https://www.statecapture.org.za/ (accessed 29 October 2020)

most threatening element that children need protection from, obscuring from public view the precarity of South African childhood lived spaces.

Reading roads and walls as part of a design agenda of built environments of public spaces that respond to particular social pathos about childhoods (Knight, 2016:4; Paechter, 2011:313), I see the school building as storying childhoods spaces in ways where movement and access is purposefully manipulated and controlled to avert outside risks providing some spatio-temporal reprieve from an outside reality. As such the boom gate barriers, high walls and other security details of the school, all actively participate in the choreography of space. My own movements to and from Madrasah A were marked by a visceral feeling of safety once inside the school, a sense that was only sharpened in relation to my feelings of anxiety and alertness whilst navigating unfamiliar roads on the outside.

The replacement of the mobile *plankie skool* with a permanent concrete structure holds an affective significance, resonating tones of futurity and hope, affirming a sense place-belonging for the children that occupy that space. The sharing of part of the school as a madrasah space for Muslim children of the community is considered an equally significant diffractive mapping and storying of childhood place-belonging. The hybrid use of public space can be seen as a gesture of sociality embracing Muslim bodies and their religious pedagogies. A gesture that perhaps offers one way to salvage confidence in the post-apartheid rainbow promise of being a "born-free" child in SA. The pragmatics of adopting an *eiesoortig* Muslim appellation have shifted somewhat for a born-free generation of South African Muslim childhoods.

Following the initial rainbow nation euphoria phase of SA's constitutional democracy, the question of how Islamic schools and *madāris* may contribute to a "duality of education" (McDonald: 2013:15) was extensively engaged within a broader national conversation on nation-building and citizenship education (Eshak: 1995; Fataar: 2007b; Niehaus: 2011; Tayob: 2011; Davids: 2012). These studies have interrogated the anxieties that a changing social and educational landscape presented for Muslims, Islamic education and the continued functioning of *madāris*, post-apartheid. Since 1994 the country's National Curriculum has been revised to address past inequalities and to also expunge the racially- religiously prejudiced tenor of apartheid state schooling under Afrikaner nationalist government. This includes being sensitive and responsive to the religious, cultural, gendered, sexual orientation and physically-able

differences of all of its child citizens.[115] Post-apartheid Muslim public opinion was mostly divided on how desegregated schooling might negatively and/or positively impact upon and influence Muslim children's religious learning and moral development. The incremental rise in the number of Muslim schools that were formed post-apartheid is one indication of how Muslims have navigated this uncertain terrain.[116]

The introduction of the *islamization* project in Muslim schools was another attempt to teach the national curriculum from an Islamic perspective, in an effort to circumvent the dual educational system (Tayob: 2011; Davids and Waghid: 2021).[117] This however has proved to be a practically difficult approach to implement for a number of reasons, mainly due to a lack of teaching expertise for merging Islamic teachings with the secular curriculum, and to do so in ways that can adequately meet the learning outcomes of both systems. Studies suggest that most Muslim schools place a higher premium on meeting the national curriculum goals, since there are post-school benefits, and economic gains to be had from having a good quality secular education in terms of future career opportunities. The *Islamic* aspects are invariably tied to regulating how notions of propriety and modesty gets physically mapped onto the bodies and movements of boy- girl children through their clothing (Tayob: 2011; McDonald: 2013)[118].

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[115] In 2019 the Department of Education announced a UNESCO sponsored school sex education curriculum (CSE) to be introduced in all primary and high schools. However, several parents, teacher unions as well as religious and cultural organizations raised objections to the provisions of the curriculum which they consider to be advocating western secular liberal sexual norms to South African children. A spokesperson for SAMNET (South African Muslim Network) stated that the "ultimate goal of CSE is to change the sexual and gender norms of society, which is why CSE could be more accurately called "abortion, promiscuity, and LGBT rights education." CSE is a "rights-based" approach to sex education and promotes sexual rights to children at the expense of their sexual health"http://alqalam.co.za/muslims-fume-at-plans-to-introduce-graphic-cse-sex-education-in-schools/ uploaded 9 November 2019 (accessed 5 February 2020).

[116] The Association of Muslim Schools (AMS) was formed in 1989 to serve as a network exchange and a space of collegiality for all Muslim schools in South Africa and other international affiliates. Although there are no details available for the total number of private and subsidised Muslim schools in South Africa, the AMS website lists over 60 in KwaZulu Natal, 26 in Gauteng and 15 in Western Cape schools that operate under the AMS banner. https://www.ams-sa.org/ (accessed 20 December 2020).

[117] The *islamization* project is an attempt to integrate two epistemic universes (the modern secular and the religious sacred). Tayob (2011: 38-54) examined some of the struggles and failures of implementing the *islamization of knowledge* project in South Africa. He concluded that whilst the project was premised on rejecting the dichotomization of knowledge sciences between the religious and secular, a bifurcation that was part of the broader modernization project of European Enlightenment - in South African Muslim schools this duality was still maintained in practice. The religious, he noted, was accommodated within the teaching-learning program and in the general functioning of the schools. The application of, and meeting the requirements of the national curriculum was prioritised and the *Islamic* component was threaded through in posturing ways.

[118] Muslim schools adopt various interpretations of what constitutes "Islamic" attire within the South African schooling context, for the most part boys do not dress any differently than they would at any state school (typically grey long pants, white shirt, blazer and a tie with school insignia), adapting girls uniforms (typically a tunic dress or short skirt with a pants option) however poses a particular pathos since the *hijāb* or modest dress can range from a scarf/burqa head-covering together with a long pants to an *abaya* (feet length long sleeved flowing dress). Sporting dress codes are also variably adapted, for example soccer shorts are lengthened to cover the knees, or girls wear a *burqini* (swim suit that fully covers the body including hair). These options are also available to any

Some Muslim schools in SA are also partially subsidised by the state, however the internal governance politics that tend to get caught up in ideological and theological debates coupled with the high costs of fees, means that for a large part of the South African Muslim school going – madrasah attending population, Muslim/Islamic schools are simply not affordable or not their preferred option. Therefore, most Muslim children in SA attend state or private schools, and then also attend *madāris* in the afternoon or weekends, and the duality of epistemic modes and learning spaces continues to map the spatio-temporalities of Muslim childhoods.

These historical-geographical-political-religious entanglements contribute to, and participate in the storying of the spatialities of Madrasah A. The built environment together with the discourses from which they emerge help map some of the ontological relationalities of Muslim childhoods. Conversations with the teachers and administrators at Madrasah A suggested that the madrasah's educative ethos is rooted in and also inimitably responsive to the home and broader social circumstances of the children in their care. I noted that it was the only madrasah of the four that had a dedicated "play-time" period where the children would play ball or other physically active games in the quadrant. Teachers mentioned to me the lack of safe recreational spaces in the area therefore a "play period" is factored into the madrasah's two hour timetable.

Many of the lessons I observed had a distinctive progressive outlook rather than a traditional or conservative one. Teacher-learner interactions were familial and conversational rather than instructive. The formal setting of the school space with desks and chairs arranged in rows facing the teachers table and white board, the high-school subject wall charts all contributed to an academic ambience of the madrasah space. This secular setting contrasted starkly with the other three madrasah spaces that were located within a masjid space. The quadrant space, for example, needed to be resourcefully adapted for the teaching about and the performance of the ritual prayers. The image below (figure 4) captures part of the spatial set-up and helps illustrate the pedagogical approach of Madrasah A. The aesthetic of colourful prayer mats softens the austere sensoria of the concrete floor. This is an apt metaphor for how the madrasah functions as an intermediary space between home and society. I observed how teachers would lovingly greet each child, offer special birthday prayers and engage them in conversations about madrasah lessons rather than instruct. Another optic relates to the ways that the make-shift

child attending public state schools as religious/ personal sensitivities are protected by the constitution. The point of contention however is that these dress codes are interpreted as part of an *islamization* intent or even a post-apartheid re-dress discourse – since they wholly accept and continue to adopt colonial models and/or western or Arab Gulf styled school uniforms instead of adapting such to an African cultural environment, climate and style aesthetic.

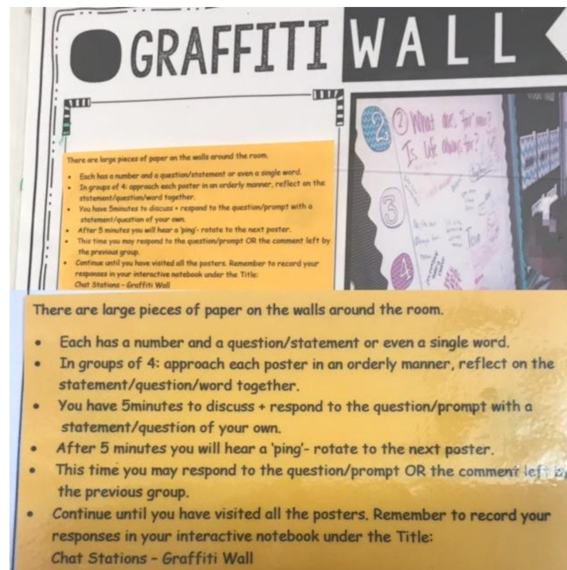
prayer space is arranged in the absence of a dividing wall. Typically Muslim prayer spaces are arranged with males placed at the front and females at the back, usually with a wall or gendered barrier. In this image, girls are not relegated to the back or separated from the boys. This inclusive arrangement was a consistent observation I made at Madrasah A and was not limited to the prayer lessons.

(Fig 4)

The principal of the madrasah indicated to me[119] that they place a high value on rationality and academic excellence, the aim of their learning program is to develop "Muslim thought leaders" and not to teach Islam through traditional rote-learning methods but rather to incorporate critical thinking and understanding into each learning area. To this end, the madrasah teaching staff attend a Montessori teacher training course[120] and the methodology is adapted within the limitations of the madrasah space. An example of this is noted in a "graffiti wall" (figure 5) set up in an intermediate class lesson I observed.

[119] Discussion with Madrasah A principal and one of the executive board members on 5 February 2018. The principal, teaching staff and executive board are the same for Madrasah D (District Six masjid/madrasah) so his comments were in reference to both *madāris*.

[120] An early childhood teaching-learning philosophy developed by Maria Montessori (1870- 1952) that advances the theory of a universal pattern of human development. Montessori methods include exploration and movement, freedom within a structured environment, constructive choices based on critical reasoning, repeatable experiences, independent thought and self-esteem, self-discipline, social cohesion, close contact with reality and nature to understand place in the world, embracing and exploring diversity https://www.montessorisa.co.za/maria-montessori/ (accessed 3 December 2020).



(Fig 5)

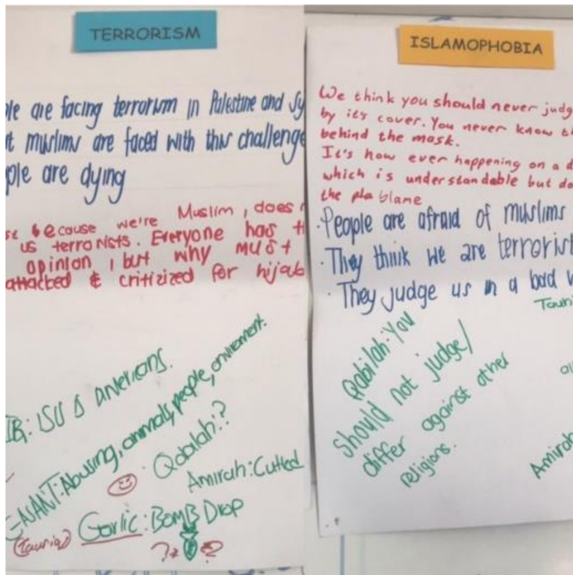
The *mu'alimah* (female teacher) superimposed six large sheets of paper over the existing school wall paraphernalia, each chart posed a question or topic for children to think about and discuss among themselves. The chart headings read: 1) how does Islam view science; 2) islamophobia; 3) terrorism; 4) how does Islam view other religions; 5) are men and women equal in Islam; and 6) the water crisis. To initiate the discussion the teacher gave each child three cards that read - "I know"; "I feel" and "I connect", these phrase cards were used as an aid to help the children think about the issues being engaged, and to frame their responses in a more considered way. Paying careful attention to the pedagogical intra-actions that co-emerged with the graffiti-wall space, I locate how the material-discursive entanglements of a rationalist approach to Islamic teaching-learning is diffracted by the application of Montessori methods, and how together they intra-actively participate in a pedagogical choreography that includes the agencies of the graffiti-wall space.

The gendered writing on the graffiti wall: diffracting voice, text and authority

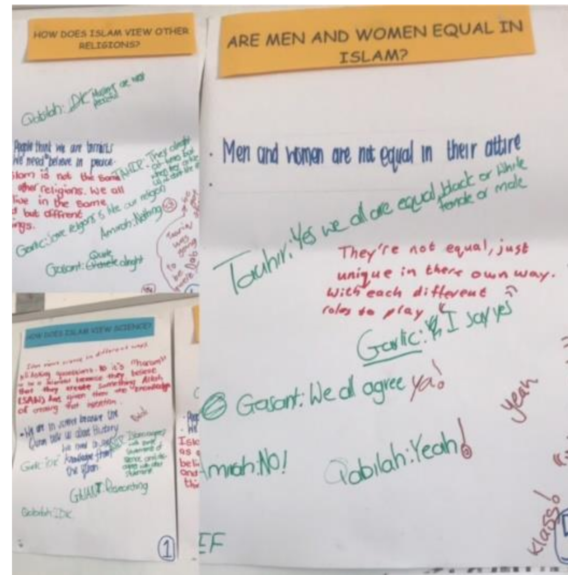
The images below (figures 6 and 7) capture children's voices as mapped onto the graffiti wall.[121] To reiterate, my reading of the wall space is not focused on the content of the children's

[121] These images were captured, with the teacher's permission, using my mobile phone camera on 6 March 2018 at the end of the class and before the teacher took down the make-shift graffiti wall. At the time (that is before applying a diffractive lens to think with about the classroom intra-actions as part of a broader storying of childhood space) I was mainly interested in capturing the children's views on gender equality, since I considered it a data rich moment for my study. Whilst a discursive analysis of the children's words would certainly enable one way of reading gender from this lesson and onto the madrasah space, a diffractive reading affords me a far more enriching and deepened perspective for thinking about gender as a diffractive pattern that co-emerges from multiple material-discursive entanglements.

responses, that is, I do not ascribe any *intent* or *meaning* to their words, rather I am interested in untangling the ecological networks of epistemologies that are diffracted onto the wall space through the agency of expression and material-discursive intra-action.



(Fig 6)



(Fig 7)

Several diffractive patterns emerge from intra-actions with the graffiti wall. Firstly, the rationalist stance that the madrasah adopts is one premised on eschewing *taqlīd* (dogmatic following of religious precedents) as pedagogical method, therefore children are encouraged to apply reasoning and prioritise logical deduction, using the phrase cards, i.e.: I think, I know, I connect. This approach emerges from a set of theological discourses within Islam that finds particular expression within the madrasah space as a directed response to some of the mystical formulations and traditional positions that have historically dominated the Cape Muslim socio-religious landscapes.[122]

[122] Most madāris in the Western Cape follow the *Shafi'i / Ash'ari* theological school of thought, which is one of the extant branches of legal and doctrinal positions in the Sunni tradition. Shafi'i adherents generally adopt a strict scripturalist approach to the practice of Islam in ways that encourages conformity to legal precedent. Additionally, a number of *tariqahs* (Sufi orders) are prevalent in the Cape which may adopt a range of differing theological positions, these *tariqahs* provide a spiritual community that is part of a global network and is considered an integral route for Islamic teaching-learning for many within the Cape community. In contrast to the dominant *Ash'ari* theological positioning in the Cape, those that adopt a "rationalist" approach takes their historical cues from a branch of scholarly traditions that emerged in 8-10th century during the Abbasid Caliphate referred to as the *Mu'tazilah* (those that withdrew/ stood apart). The key point of difference between the two theological approaches is that rationalists do not consider revelation (Qur'anic text and prophetic precedent) as the only or even the main sources of knowledge, and aver that all knowledge sciences (material and spiritual) are considered authoritative. Science, logical reasoning as opposed to blind following and strict adherence to scriptural texts is one of the defining features of rationalist approach to teaching-learning Islam. A dynamic that was captured in the *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* narrative mentioned in chapter three

As noted previously, the prevailing forms of madrasah praxis in the Cape are rooted in a *tasawwuf* or spiritual tradition that stem from the teachings and practices of the pious forebears of the early Cape Muslim community. Whilst some of these formulations are regarded as syncretic adaptations that were responsive to the socio-political contexts and hybrid cultures of the nascent Muslim community (Dangor, 1997: 141-144; Jeppie, 1996: 141-142; Da Costa and Davids, 2005: 47; Shell, 2006:103) and although some of its particularities may have diffused over time, this mystical tradition continues to inform the character of most *madāris* in the Cape. In addition to learning about Islam in *madāris*, usually through mnemonically chanting of litanies and rote-learning tenets of the faith from prescriptive texts, Muslim children are generally socialised into a faith ethic through communal forms of ritual practices that include attending *dhikr* or *gadat* (prayer gatherings), visiting *karamat* (holy shrines) and commemorating the *mawlid al-Nabī* (birth of the Prophet). *Madāris* also tend to place a greater emphasis on *ḥifẓ* (memorisation of the Quran) and developing a proficient *lagu* (melodious recitation) since these are religious competency skills that are socially prised within the community (Baker, 2009: 51; Waghid, 2011:58). However, this pedagogical approach has also been critiqued by some as “not encouraging an understanding” of Islamic precepts, which has a potential to elicit “uncritical and conditioned behaviour” also certain mystical practices are seen as opening up “a possibility for conformist pattern of Muslim behaviour” (Waghid, 2011: 60-68) or can “easily serve to dupe, as a palliative, to soothe the pain, while never addressing the core of the community’s crisis” (Fataar, 2019:19). Rote-learning, privileging memorisation of scriptures without understanding, literalist understandings of and dogmatic application of texts, reliance on pietistic forms of intersession - are all seen as leading to passivity, inflexibility and backwardness in the Muslim community which results in apolitical, socially disconnected, anti-intellectual faith adherents (Behardien: 2012, Davids: 2012; Fataar: 2019; 2014; Waghid: 2011; Davids and Waghid:2021).

What the principal of Madrasah A refers to as a rationalist ethos of the madrasah is in fact a response to this conformist and traditional pedagogical approach on the one hand, but also a way of responding to the broader socio-economic contexts of the Cape Muslim community generally. This approach also emerges from a parallel set of modernity-tradition debates that occurred in the main centres of Islamic higher learning across the globe during the nineteenth century and that found particular expression in masjids and *madāris* in the Cape during the late

1930s.[123] Based on the madrasah's "rationalist" pedagogical intent using Montessori methods – the graffiti wall can be viewed as intra-actively producing a text of religious opinion. Within an Islamic pedagogical framework, particularly when related to prescriptive formulations typically adopted in traditional *madāris* in the Cape[124] the graffiti wall space as *religious text* raises an interesting set of provocations for thinking about the madrasah as a gendered space.

I noted with interest the types of conversations that occurred between the children in producing a text on the graffiti wall. Before writing their opinions onto the wall the children engaged in a "chat station", these were lively animated discussions about the topics and offered me a textured snapshot for thinking about children's subjectivities. For example, in discussing the topic of terrorism and islamophobia, they pointed to portrayals of Muslims as violent terrorists in movies they've seen and media images about Muslim suffering in ongoing wars in Syria and Palestine, they also commented on the *hijāb* being targeted and banned in Europe - they did not however draw any parallels to the kinds of violence and terror that exists in their own neighbourhood. The associative and dissociative remarks they made about themselves in relation to the topics were considered telling. For example, their comments (figure 6) included phrases such as "*they* think *we* are terrorists"; "*they* judge *us*"; "just because *we're* Muslims doesn't make *us* terrorists" also "when *they* criticize *us, I* don't like *them*" (emphasis added). These mappings of difference between the self and an unspecified other offers an illustrative

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[123] Behardien (2012, 2014) documents the trajectory of "Rational Islam" and the influence of the Al-Azhar University, Egypt trained scholar *Shaykh* Shakier Gamieldien within the Western Cape Muslim community since the late 1930s. He defines "Modern Rational Islam" as a discourse that emerged in Egypt during the nineteenth century as "a self-conscious intellectual response to European imperial imposition in Muslim heartlands", including the impact of western modernity, its ensuing advancements in science and technology and the formations of modern states upon Muslim societies. 'Rational Islam' he notes provided the "socio-political and religious framework for the Egyptian experiment with modernization" (Behardien, 2012: 1). Madrasah A's ethos is formulated mainly around these theological teachings. Some of the defining features of this approach includes: a) dispelling the notion of a bifurcation of knowledge between religious and secular. The faith and conditions of Muslims can only be improved by mastering scientific inquiry and applying logic to understand the creator and creation; b) rejection of blind following, conformity and seeking intersession through intermediaries such as shrines, prescriptive texts or salvation through pious persons; and c) adopting a critical approach and engaged understanding of the world (Behardien, 2014:51-53).

[124] One of the main texts used in most madāris in the Cape is the "Ar-Risaalah Al-Mufeedah: A Book on General Islamic Knowledge" compiled by Sheikh M A Fakier published in English in 1995 with an earlier Afrikaans version "Ar-Riesaalah Al- Moefiedah" published in 1982. This text is a contemporary updated rendition of the *Ash'ari* theology and *Shafi'i* jurisprudence that was used in madāris by the early Muslim community, it includes key doctrines taught in the Cape referred to as the *sanusiyyah* "twintag siefaat" (twenty attributes of God). The text also provides practical instructions for performance of ritual prayers as well as a list of daily invocations to be memorised and gives basic guidelines for the comportment and set of moral behaviours for children to learn about and adopt practically. Another popular children's madrasah text used in the Cape is the "I am a Muslim" two part book series published in 1962 and 1978 respectively, reprinted as a set in 1994 by Sheikh Abubaker Najaar (d.1993). The foreword of the 1994 edition notes that the text is intended for Muslim children living as a minority in a society "who do not have the benefit of a unified Madressah curriculum".

canvas of epistemic scripts that inform Muslim children's subjectivities. It appeared to me that their notions of self or what I read as their understandings of an *eiesoortig* (own kind) Muslim identity was one that was mediated through media and technology. The children were not only aware of how geo-political discourses about Muslims and Islam as violent were portrayed in the media but they also identified themselves or their Muslim identities as being included in those portrayals.

I consider there to be suggestive parallels between these mediated notions of self and the types of apartheid scripts of self and belonging that were noted in the previous section. Both reflect similar patterns of relationality to power and forms of resistance to dominant discourses about racialized religious identity politics. During apartheid, as was noted, this sense of self was expressed through the notion of *ordentlikheid* (respectability), and *Malayness* provided a marker of difference, an ambiguously located identity category that distinguished Muslimness from colouredness. However for the children of Madrasah A this self-other distinction was correlated to broader islamophobic discourses, an identity category claimed on religious rather than racial or ethnic difference. It also signalled children's porous notion of spatial belongings, since the generic "they/them" that they were referencing as the other was not a geographically located entity but one discursively mapped across multiple mediated sites that included international news networks, popular filmographies and public imaginaries about Muslims and Islam. The exchanges I observed between the children about their understandings of islamophobia is an important epistemological mapping of how Muslim children's notions of self are shaped and informed by a globalised post 9/11 world. It is not an insignificant point to note that negative associations of the *hijāb* and Muslim women's dress choices as part of an islamophobic narrative were specifically highlighted and contested by the children during their chat station discussions. Gendered forms of islamophobia (Zine, 2004:117; Khoja-Moolji, 2018:6) permeate digitised, celluloid and virtual worlds of children and map patterns of difference and otherness, these types of messaging were therefore conspicuously relayed onto the graffiti-wall text.

The graffiti-wall offered an edifying set of optics for thinking about gender and childhood spaces. In observing the mapping of children's opinions onto the graffiti-wall and the general tenor of the child-adult pedagogical relationship where children were encouraged to apply their own reasoning about these complex social issues. I noted how children's voices as text helped to order the space differently, and more inclusively. I consider the optics of the graffiti-wall

and the quadrant prayer space to be a significant levelling of epistemologies, the direction and flow of voices as mapped onto the wall (and floor space) are messy, multi-layered and intra-active. The exchange of knowledges, the differing ways of seeing, being and knowing the world between the children marks an important pedagogical dis/ordering of space, within the context of graffiti-wall, the boy, girl, quite, loud, unsure, and the opinionated are all afforded a "space" of being heard.

Murris (2013: 246) for example uses the term "epistemic modesty" to describe how children's voices are *heard* and considered as *authoritative knowers* within an asymmetrical pedagogical relationship (a triadic relationality between teacher, learner and content). She submits that age often operates as a site of discrimination for children in a classroom pedagogical exchange, in that adult hearers often hold explicit and implicit assumptions and prejudices about children, about what they know and their capacity to educate others, including other children as well as adults. A lens of epistemic modesty asks that we re-think what constitutes epistemic injustice/ justice within this asymmetrical relationship (where the teacher and content/text inevitably hold a credibility privilege and children are considered through a deficit lens). The intra-actions of the graffiti wall space helps locate children's voice as a site of *potentia*,[125] that is age (and gender) are not seen as a deficit. Studies on early childhood classroom interactions have shown that children are "knowledgeable, intentional and skilled actors" who employ various strategies to communicate and assert their agency through body language, silences and avoidance, in this way they actively participate in the construction of childhood learning as a structural space (Ebrahim, 2011:129). Within the pedagogical choreographies of this wall space, children's voices and opinions about Islamic issues are not prejudicially excluded on account of their age or gender, rather they are featured prominently as experiential knowers and transmitters of knowledge. The graffiti-wall space provides a symmetrical or levelling of the learning space that is made possible by excluding a prescriptive or prior text as the holder or mediator of authoritative knowledge. As such it offers an important diffractive space for navigating and channelling gendered ways of knowing, learning and teaching about Islam.

[125] A theorisation on power relationalities as developed posthumanist scholar Rosi Braidotti. In this framing power can be viewed as *potentia* that is power relationships that are productive and enabling, a relationality premised on networks, new ideas and collective endeavour. On an opposite scale, power can also be viewed as *potestas* that is power relations that are restrictive, hinder and are controlling, they are premised on hierarchy and inequality (Motala, 2018: 20-21).

5.2: Kanala Dorp: a hauntological storying of Muslim space[126]

Madrasah D is part of a masjid located in Cape Town city's iconic District Six. The masjid was constructed in 1887 and is one of the oldest remaining structures of District Six following apartheid forced removals and destruction of the neighbourhood during the early 1970s.[127] My commute to the madrasah was a visually and affectively paradoxical experience. Travelling along a highway towards the city bowl, my gaze was drawn to the picturesque landmarks that are the mainstays of the city, the Atlantic Ocean and Table Mountain. From the highway one could easily miss the minaret against the towering backdrop of the mountain. Yet the masjid's obscured presence amidst the striking surrounding space gestures not only toward the visible natural beauty but also the invisiblised scars of the city's nature-culture landscape (Chidester, 2000:15; Geschier, 2007:37).

To access the madrasah via a network of side streets and off-ramps, I needed to pass through a mass of unoccupied space and vacant land that is sporadically dotted with building structures that range from the decrepit to a few newly constructed urban living and working spaces. The vacancy and emptiness of the surrounding madrasah/masjid space in relation to the occupancy and vibrancy of the gentrified inner-city space is a particularly important past-present storying of South African Muslim childhood places. The painful history of dispossession and upheaval of a once vibrant District Six community has been extensively documented through various academic and creative mediums including photographic, poetical and other museographical projects as well as internationally acclaimed musicals, film productions and theatrical performances (Wicomb: 1998; Chidester: 2000; Geschier: 2007; Boswell: 2011; Lin-Sommer: 2016; Davids: 2017). Threading this archive and history of a built/ destroyed- environment/ community dynamic to think about childhood spaces together with the ongoing post-apartheid discourses on land restitution and the gentrification of inner-city spaces, I consider how Madrasah D co-creates contemporary Muslim children's past-present place-stories.

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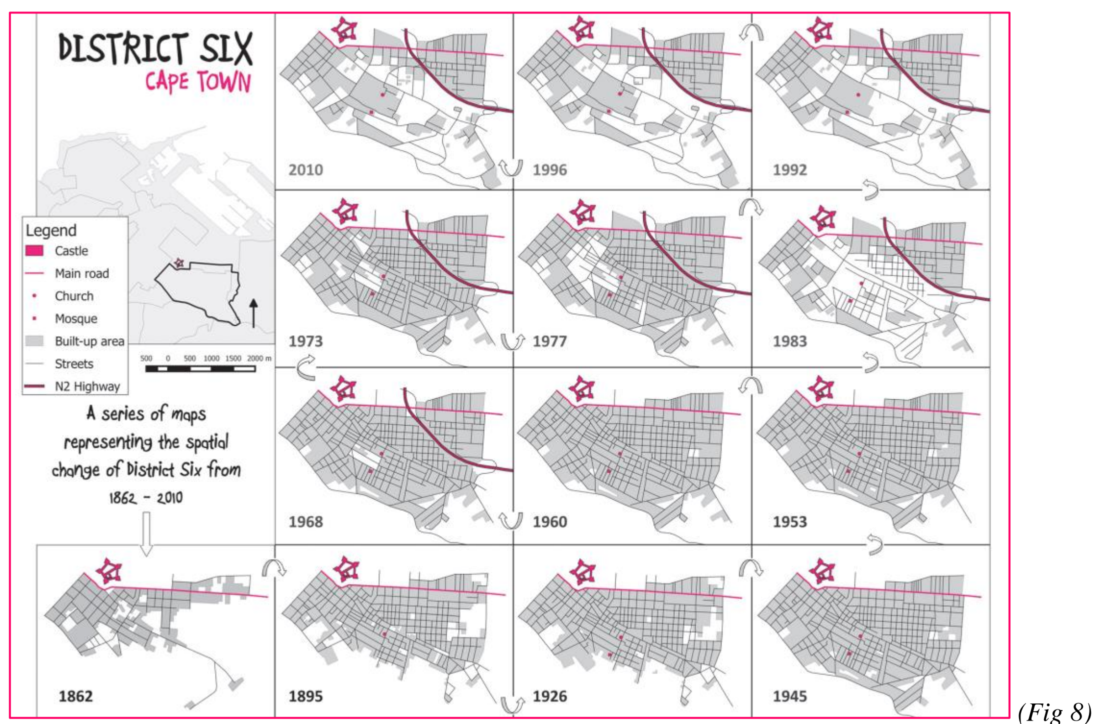
[126] This subheading is borrowed from Zembylas *et al* (2020) that references an 1862 map of Cape Town that lists District Six as *Kanala Dorp* (town). The Malay term *kanala* means "to help one another" and is commonly used by Muslims in the Cape to convey a range of affective gestures related to kindness, generosity and camaraderie. The term hauntology coined by French scholar Jacques Derrida is a play on the word "ontology" and is used as a way to theorise the relationship between the past and present.

[127] "On February 11, 1966, the apartheid government declared District Six a whites-only area under the Group Areas Act of 1950. Over 60 000 inhabitants were forcibly removed to the Cape Flats, except for few spaces of worship, since 1968 most of the buildings were bulldozed and by 1982 almost all evidence of the district had been destroyed. https://www.saha.org.za/news/2010/February/district_six_recalling_the_forced_removals. (accessed 21 December 2020)

A series of static maps or "time slices" by Dawood and Motala (2015) poignantly captures the spatial changes of Cape Town's District Six over a period of time (figure 8)[128] and provides a geo-visualisation experience of how the built environment both enlivens and depletes space and thereby participates in place-making. Referring to this GIS (geographical information systems) approach as a *spacetimemattering* Zembylas *et al* (2020: 41) demonstrate how geomatics mapping can help affectively story places, by focusing on absences/presences, here/now, there/then, vacancy/vibrancy the past-present story of District Six is viewed as a phenomena bounded by space, time, and matter in ways that are nonlinear and multiply entangled. This temporal diffracted reading using geomatics mapping as a tool, allows them to "make evident the ghostly presences of roads, buildings, and cultural activities of District Six". Geomatics mapping used in this way is intended to affectively show how "apartheid laws and social structures continue to bleed into the presence of life" (ibid: 40).



(Fig 8)

In this mapping graphic, the masjid space (represented as a pink dot) is visually sedimented in the year 1895 and becomes part of the District Six land story. The roads, highway and streets that emerge in subsequent years together with the disappearances of the artefacts of human presences from these spaces narrate a story of an apartheid crafting of place. Unlike the roads

[128] This static time series map consists of 13 maps that represent District Six over a period of time between the years 1862 – 2010. (Dawood and Motala, 2015:193)

that divided and re-created racialized urban spaces in the Kensington-Factreton-Maitland communities of Madrasah A, the construction of roads and highways in District Six served to empty, erase and displace humans with discarded rubble matter. The 1970s forced removals and desolation of District Six is mapped as a concerted emptying and displacement of human-lived spaces. When contrasted with the continuing presence and existence of the masjid space (together with the Methodist church that is also mapped on time-series graphic) as part of the apartheid and post-apartheid city-scape, nature-culture binaries are distorted, and the roads and walls of District Six are seen as an entanglement of multitude material-discursive-affective storyings. This storying of religious space as a hauntology or past-present relationalities (Zembylas *et al*: 2020) is used to map some of the diffractive patterns that co-emerged from my observations at Madrasah D.

My diffractive reading of the spatialities of Madrasah D focuses on three past-present encounters, I look at the masjid-madrasa space as part of a physical space that is historically and presently mapped as both a destroyed, emptied or rubble space and as a sacred, preserved and active space of communal praxis. I also read it as a discursive space, where the memorialisation of District Six past destruction is entangled with a present-future discourse of reclaiming and rebuilding of space that invariably participates in the economics and gentrification of space. Finally, I read the masjid-madrasah space as part of an affective space, where expressions of community, place-belonging are encountered through the roads, sounds, language and street culture of District Six. Historically, District Six was referred to as *Kanala* Dorp, a term that encapsulates an ethic of communality and a form of faith praxis that conveys a sentiment of generosity and collective care. I consider how this ethic, in particular, is diffracted through the pedagogies and spatialities of Madrasah D.

One of the inimitable ways that the roads and streets of District Six participate in enlivening and characterising the space is through its soundscapes.[129] Describing the multi-cultural vibrancy and musicality that was part of the street life of District Six in the 1950s, Miller (2007: 138-139) notes how fisherman blowing their fish horns at the nearby harbour, the noon-gun blasting from the city, the jazz bands coupled with the sounds of the call to prayer from the

[129] Pijanowski *et al* (2011) define a soundscape ecology as a mapping of different phonic interactions that include biological, geophysical and anthropogenic sounds that emanate from a landscape, they refer to this as an "ecosystem of processes and human activities". An ecological soundscape is a mapping of nature-human dynamics across different spatial and temporal scales, as such it can offer a perspective of some of the ways in which sounds, like roads and walls affect and impact upon the storying of childhood spaces.

masjid - all partook in the soundscapes of the neighbourhood. A distinctive medley of religious camaraderie that has come to define how the District Six community is remembered. The vibrancy of District Six roads are also closely associated with the *Tweede Nuwe Jaar* (second New Year) street celebration by the *nagtroepe* (night bands), an annual inner-city street carnival parade from District Six (Kanala Dorp) to the Bo-Kaap (Malay Quarter) that emerged during the late 1800s. The Cape Malay Choirs formed in the early 1960s is another iteration of a distinctive District Six sound. These musical ensembles, as a particular Cape coloured phenomenon, continues to map the social landscapes and soundscapes of the city. Historically, the *nagtroepe* as part of a colonial era mapping of oppression and enslavement in a carnival atmosphere of colourful merriment onto the streets of District Six is viewed as a subversive form of social resistance against colonial masters. [130] Jeppie (1990: 5) suggests the carnival offers a deeper understanding of the class, race and gendered dynamics in Cape Town's inner city communities like District Six. The carnival as a particular cultural expression and sound of the coloured community was not merely a means to deflect attention from a social reality of racial inequalities, its formation was an important means of controlling how that expression was channelled and presented publically as culture. These expressions were entangled with ambiguous sets of intra-actions that both affirmed certain cultural dispositions that would distinguish them from an indigeneity of blackness, but also ensure that culture remained distinct from whiteness, in other words it co-created a racialized othering of Cape culture.

Cape Malay Choirs formed part of the soundscapes and street culture of District Six with its distinct traditional Malay sound the *ghoema*[131] (drum sound), *moppies* (comical or satirical songs) and *nederlandsliedjies* (Dutch Afrikaans songs (Gaulier and Martin, 2017: 19-21). This musical expression involved creatively interpreting certain "Islamic" precepts as part of a Malay cultural cadence. The *nagtroepe* carnival provided an opportunity for Malay/ Muslims to momentarily forgo some of the rigours of social *ordentlikheid* (respectability) by adopting a

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[130] *Nagtroepe* are referred to in varied iterations such as Cape Minstrels or *Coon* Carnival and *Kaapse Klopse.* The term *coon* is used derogatorily as part of the blackface minstrelsy culture in the United States, its popular use in the Cape is however in reference to a spirit of revelry and carousing among colonial subjects (Gaulier and Martin, 2017: 3-4). The mimicry of the carnival spirit was one way the enslaved and economically oppressed were able to taunt and passively resist their social positioning against the colonial and apartheid powers. So there is much ambivalence and divided opinions as to whether or not the term *coon* in the South African context is racially insensitive and perpetuates colonial stereotypes about black bodies being unruly, or as objects of amusement and entertainment for white consumption, uncivilised and infantilising or as liberating in its satirical hyper-performativeness of these stereotypes by returning the white gaze in condescension.

[131] A *ghoema* is small wooden barrel drum which originates from *ngoma* the word for drum in Swahili. A word and sound that was brought to the Cape via Muslim slaves from Zanzibar and Madagascar.

sense of the *deurmekaar* (confusion, disorder, chaos). Whilst *deurmekaar* holds negative connotations, it was interpreted by Malay Choir participants in a more positive light to imply fun, excitement, and a respite that was seen as counter-hegemonic and liberating even. To render this understanding in a different tone, Malay choir members who were well-versed in Islamic theology, referred to the carnival as a *tariek* – a term associated with the Sufi concept of *tariqah* (spiritual path). Participation in the carnival, when premised in this light, took on a particular tenor of being a spiritual exercise closely related to the practice of *dhikr* (spiritual remembrances) as well as the *ratiep* (spiritual trance). The carnival presented Muslims with the opportunity to subvert an *ordentlikheid* state with the *deurmekaar,* this duality of states and the ability to transcend them was thus considered as an especially liberating spiritual experience. An experience that performers, supporters and spectators collectively participated in (ibid).

This narrative of crafting a Muslim spiritual experience from a pastiche of merrymaking song and dance reflected broader patterns of gendered relations. Although the *nagtroepe* and the activities of the Malay choirs presented a masculinised public face, women played a key yet less visible supportive role mainly by volunteering their sewing, cooking and organising labour and skills, and importantly also contributing financially (Jeppie, 1990: 23; Gaulier and Martin, 2017: 21-23). Similarly, *ordentlikheid* for Muslim women meant that their domestic skills and labour were seen as prised contributions, rather than their roles as wage-earners that facilitated financial support for *nagtroepe*. Underpinning these codes are multiple currents of patriarchy where certain coloured men held the authority to define and negotiate gendered and sexual roles within their own communities, and could therefore *permit* any deviation from these social norms. As suggestive by case of the Malay Choirs, often simply by rendering certain forms of deviations like a state of *deurmekaar* as religiously praiseworthy, whilst other acts involving female visibility were ambivalently sanctioned. Gendered codes were pliable and could be shifted at the whim of male authority, often using religious sentiment and cultural norms as a sanctioning power.

Although the phenomena of the *nagtroepe* as part of the District Six experience does not represent a determinative spectrum for understanding the full historical spectre of Cape Muslims, it does help to map some the ways that roads, street culture and sounds intra-actively participate in the storying of place. It also helps to locate the types of polyphonic harmonies required in the making of people, culture, religion, gender and place. In the case of the inner-

city working class Muslim community, this required harmonising the ambiguities of their faith, gender and social circumstances. For example, the attire or dress codes Malay choirs adopted included a European styled suit and tie worn with the *koofie* (a red Turkish headgear sometimes called *fez*) traditionally worn in the Cape by male *hajjis* (those who have performed the ritual pilgrimage) as a symbol of respect and of religious authority; the *voorsingers* (lead singers) of the Malay choirs often served as the *mu'athin* (person that calls to prayer) in the masjid and their musicality skills was also used to enhance the melodic performances of the *salawāt* (praise poems and salutations), *gadat* (prayer gatherings) *and qirāt* (Quran recitation) cantillations. These practices help instil particular "hearing habits, tastes and aesthetic norms" (Gaulier and Martin, 2017: 88-89) of the Cape Muslim community and co-created its religious soundscapes.

Another perspective for thinking with and about Muslim childhood spatialities as an eco-system of entangled soundscapes, is to understand the role that *madāris* had in developing a particularised Cape Muslim sound. If Malay choirs are understood as threading an Islamic mythical expression through its musicality, then *madāris* can be viewed as spaces where these hybrid expressions and sounds were formalised as the religious language of the Muslim community through its pedagogical praxis. In commenting on the orthoepic practices of *madāris* in the Cape, Davids (1992:41-44) notes that the memorisation techniques and *koplesboek* (mnemonic texts) used for the teaching-learning of Islamic dictums developed from a creative creolisation of Arabic-Malayu-Afrikaans sounds. For example, the process of memorization is called *faam-maak* "a composite of two lexical morphemes from two different languages - *faam,* from Malayu, and *maak* from Afrikaans". Other terms like *batja* (read), *ai-ya* (spell), *toellies* (write) provide the pedagogical language and methodologies of the traditional Cape madrasah space. Davids (ibid) notes

> These linguistic features and items have within themselves a degree of originality and, at the same time, a communal relatedness. Hence, what they might lack in sophistication is nevertheless made up for by their usefulness for communication and linguistic creativity…their transmission is not in isolation of the human element. These linguistic features and lexical items are perpetuated, with all the nuances of the community's distinctive humour, through the *madrasah* and even the mosque.

This unique sound helped construct a linguistically and phonetically entangled religious language of the *slamse* community (colloquial term for Cape Muslims and *madāris* called *slamse-skool*). Moreover, it provided the Muslim community with a source of intellectual currency that was otherwise denied to them. The spoken languages of the Cape coloured

community was premised as "uncultured patois" or referred to as *kombuis taal* (kitchen speak) and the racially charged *hotnots taal* (indigenous sounds) by Dutch colonisers (Davids, 1992: 45). However the Arabic-Malayu-Afrikaans developed by the early Muslim scholars and transmitted through the madrasah system was not only a pragmatic pedagogical tool but was essentially formulated in response to the limitations of the Afrikaans / Dutch language to adequately express the sophistry of Islamic theological and philosophical precepts (Davids: 1992; Rafudeen: 2005; Jappie: 2011). It is this philological heritage, together with the musicality tradition of the *nagtroepe*, the voice of the *mu'athin* calling to daily prayers and the mnemonic chants of children learning to *badja* lessons from *koples boeke* that provided the *slamse* sounds that have historically been mapped onto the roads and reverberated through the walls of the masjid and *madāris* of District Six. Therefore the destruction and desolation of District Six and the displacement of its people during the 1960s is also a cacophonous mapping of the silencing of this religious soundscape of Muslim childhoods.

Threading these historical soundscapes to a present-day storying of the spatialities of Madrasah D, I consider how a politics of memory gets re-produced, re-membered and re-claimed as part of a past-present re-mapping of the District Six landscape. One of the ways the silences and absences of apartheid dispossession and destruction is memorialised and the vacancy of the empty land spaces are re-filled is by documenting oral testimonies of inter-generational trauma and grief at the loss of place-belonging and archiving these memories of place and community. Community initiatives such as the District Six museum[132] forms part of the strategies to memorialise this historical experience and also creatively articulate and affectively map a present-future re-visioning of District Six (Geschier: 2007; Motala: 2018, 2020).

Another past-present mapping that forms part of a broader decolonising effort is through the restructuring of the history curricula of schools and higher education institutes about how and whose histories of District Six get taught (Davids: 2017; Zembylas *et al*: 2020). The masjid-madrasah space with the sound of the daily *athān* and other religious intonations is similarly an important site for inter-generational exchange of tradition and forms of communal praxis. These strands are just some of the ways that District Six past-present continuities are agentively mapped onto the mind and heart spaces of the public, it makes visible the affective scars that a

[132] The District Six Museum Foundation was formed in 1989 as a collective community, business and academic body from which the establishment of the museum was initiated. The museum was officially launched on 10 December 1994 https://www.districtsix.co.za/about-the-district-six-museum/ (accessed 28 November 2020).

desolate vacant landspace hides. Through these efforts the public gaze cannot be averted and is forced to bear witness to, and participate in the memories of place.

Memory however is an unstable, vacillating and profoundly intimate concept upon which to construct a collective narrative of restitution and re-dress. Memories are materially-discursively and affectively diffracted, so priorities, investments and voices are differently mapped onto this intra-active space. Harvesting of memories is often entangled with the country's liberal capitalist economic model that depends on a free-market business practice on the one hand, and its constitutional principles of re-righting past wrongs on the other. In the case of District Six, the lines between the two can get blurred, and the past is often remembered through the dictates of economic interests. For example, the city profits hugely from tourism revenues, it is also one of the main streams of creating employment, so the climate is rife for appropriating a Cape Muslim culture in ways that are profit-driven rather than appreciating its innate value as a vibrant part of the city's character and a living tradition of many who inhabit its landspace.

The main post-apartheid legal instrument to reclaim homes (and by implication lives, livelihoods and community) that were previously destroyed in District Six is the *Restitution of Land Rights Act, No 22* that was passed in 1994.[133] Returning and re-constructing dispossessed land also means that the visual evidence of past destruction (the vacant space) will be filled, the state of vacancy will no longer stand as testament to the past if re-built and re-occupied. In other words, the heritage of District Six is ambiguously located as both a once vibrant community and a living place *and* as a once destroyed and desolated place. Holding both these past realities in the present beyond memory is a tenuous task. Some of the undercurrents that re-developing District Six on a past-present axis includes concerns about what the return of mostly by now senior-aged claimants would mean in terms of sustaining the economic vitalities of the neighbourhood.

Current economic realities of a once displaced community means many residents from the past are unable to afford the cost of return in the present. This reality opens pathways for gentrifying the memory of this historically significant space. One of the consequences of gentrification is that commercial developers market a curated version of District Six and its cultural

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[133] This legislation gives any person/s that have been forcefully removed and/or had their homes dispossessed during apartheid the right to claim for restitution from government. Between the years 1995-1998 the commission on Restitution of Land Rights received 2760 claims from District Six land owners and tenancy right holders.

soundscapes in ways that renders the space attractive to tourists and foreign investors. The communal ethic and ways of encountering the streets, sounds and movements as part of a living cultural tradition, that includes church bells and the daily calls to prayer of the past are not necessarily re-created, rather they are co-created anew with a different set of realities and relationalities. The present built environment includes more roads increased road traffic, construction and related commercial activities that alters the noise and air pollution quotient of the space.[134]

Madrasah D is thus located within a complex ecology of historical, geographical, political, theological and economic entanglements. Holding these past-present relationalities in mind, I discuss some of my observational experiences at Madrasah D and consider how these historical-political-economic factors are diffracted through the pedagogies of the space, and also direct attention to some of the gendered patterns that co-emerged from my intra-actions in that space.

The masjid-madrasah space accommodates three different age-groups of children, one group (7 -12 year old boys) uses the main prayer space on the ground level of the masjid; the upstairs section which is a large balcony space that is normally reserved as a women's prayer area is used for the senior group of children (high school boys and girls), a section of the upstairs space that is partially separated by a wall is used for the youngest group of children (girls and boys under 7 years old). The downstairs classes were conducted with the boy children and the *mu'alim* (male teacher) sitting on the carpet, upstairs some of the younger childen used lap desks but sat on the floor together with the *mu'alimah*, and the senior group of children and female teacher had desks and chairs to sit on.

I spent majority of my time upstairs observing the lessons in the section with the youngest group of children but would occasionally move to the other classes. The acoustics of the space meant that I could hear muted sounds from the other classes as well. On a few occasions, all the children would gather upstairs, either to watch a documentary video on a teacher's laptop or would come together for a group discussion with the madrasah administrator and teachers. During the course of the madrasah day, the *athān* (call to prayer) would sound signalling the

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[134] A notable example is a noise pollution complaint lodged in May 2020 by a new resident against the *athān,* the incident attracted much public comment for the insensitivity of the complainant as it was first time in the history of District Six that the sound of the call to prayer was considered a public disturbance https://www.newframe.com/gentrification-and-the-athaan-in-district-six/ (accessed 12 November 2020).

late afternoon *Asr* prayer, in response all the senior and younger boys would proceed downstairs to pray whilst the girls and female teachers (myself included) would remain upstairs to pray.[135] From my limited vision of the main downstairs prayer space it appeared that very few people, if at all, from the "outside" or public would be present for the late afternoon prayers except for the madrasah occupants. A boy learner would be selected to offer the *iqamah* (pre-prayer invocation) and the *mu'alim* or the madrasah administrator (also a male) would lead the prayer. Classes would resume after the prayers and conclude by 17h30. Although many of the children would stay on later, some even till the next prayer time would set in at sunset, waiting for parents or lift clubs to pick them up. For the time period I spent at the madrasah (February to early May in 2018), the changing seasonal times for the prayer cycle meant that the sunset prayer (*magrib*) shifted from 19h30 in February to approximately 18h00 by May.

One of the persistent observations I made at Madrasah D was to note that many of the children seemed particularly lethargic, most notable in the youngest group of children. I found that they would often lie sprawled across the carpet, or I would catch them yawning. I also noted how much of the teacher-learner interactions would involve discussions about children's late arrivals or teacher's complaints about parents arriving late for pick-ups.[136] Some of the children would enter the madrasah space wearing their school uniforms, often carrying their heavy school bags and sporting equipment and also have another bag with the madrasah clothes which they would change into. This aspect stood out for me as I did not encounter this at any of the other three madrasah spaces.

In one interaction with children from the elementary class, I jokingly asked them if they were yawning and lying down during their lesson because they found it boring. A young boy laughingly replied, "No! *yoh teitie* [aunty] me and my sister leave home before *fajr* [pre-dawn

[135] I also attended a few weekend public programmes hosted by the madrasah. These were held in the downstairs main prayer section for both males and females including the congregational prayers.

[136] I noted in my field notes that the topic of late-coming/ pick up times was something brought up at each of my visits, for example, on 1 March 2018, during a group discussion the madrasah administrator referenced the Quranic chapter *al-Asr* or Time (Q: 103), he stressed the importance of being punctual and informed the children that it is "a matter of faith to respect time" -n his discussion he related the concept of time to parents that arrive late for pickups. Late pickups mean that the teachers cannot leave on time and get caught up in the late afternoon city traffic, so everyone including the teachers and their family's time is being disrespected. Another occasion on 14 February 2018, the *mu'alimah* asks a girl in the senior class whose eyes were closing whilst reading her Quran lesson to go wash her face to keep awake. Most of the class interactions involved in one way or the other negotiations about how much time children have between school and doing school homework or studying left to spend time for revising their madrasah lessons at home. Parents are expected to sign a madrasah homework diary, yet from the teacher-learner conversations I observed it would appear that many of the senior group class, in particular, do not actually spend much time attending to or revising their madrasah lessons (which mostly involve memorising short chapters from the Quran or practice Arabic reading) nor are their homework diaries regularly signed/checked by their parents.

prayers] so we get up very early". The conversation revealed that he, like many of the other children, commute daily from outlying areas on the Cape Flats or from the northern suburbs to attend schools and madrasah that were closer to the city centre since many of their parents worked in the city bowl. Also, some of the children that attended Madrasah D did so mainly because either their parents or grandparents had been part of the District Six community before being forcibly removed during the 1970s and had been relocated to the Cape Flats, or they had an affiliation with the *imām* and to the masjid itself. The children I spoke to were acutely aware of the history of District Six and the masjid which suggested a sense of affinity to the area.[137]

When asked what aspects of being a Muslim or activities they loved or enjoyed the most, many of the children responded by saying they loved fasting during the month of Ramadan the best, they especially enjoyed the special foods prepared for *boeka* (breaking of the fast) such as *daaljies, samoosas* and *boeber,*[138] a few indicated that they loved attending the evening prayers during the month of Ramadan at the masjid with their parents/grandparents. Ritual was therefore closely associated with notions of community belonging through the sharing of food (Baderoon: 2002). Many of the children explained that they not only attended the Ramadan prayers at the masjid with their parents but also accompanied them for the talks, lectures and other public programmes regularly hosted at the masjid over weekends.

During the time I spent at the madrasah there was a flurry of activity organising busses and meals for a Saturday madrasah family surf walk. Other weekend activities included inviting a professional snake handler to introduce the children to the world of reptilians, on another occasion the fire department presented a fire safety demonstration for the children and their families. Weekend madrasah field trips often included visits to museums, attending sustainable gardening workshops and other educative sites. The previous year, the madrasah hosted a star-gazing weekend sleepover at the Sutherland planetarium for the teachers, children and their extended families. The weekend formed part of the madrasah lessons about the Islamic lunar calendar and learning about celestial lifeworlds.

Conversations with the madrasah administrator confirmed that the madrasah student body is made up of a sizable percentage of children travelling from the Cape Flats. Whilst many are also from the surrounding areas (such as Woodstock and Walmer Estate), he also noted some

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[137] Group discussion with children from the elementary class, 25 April 2018.

[138] Typical food of Cape Muslims traditionally served during Ramadan or other special occasions, *daaljies samosas* are spicy fried savoury dishes and *boeber* a sweet rose flavoured milk drink.

of the children's parents are young professionals that have recently moved closer to city bowl or Atlantic seaboard into previously white suburbs (such as Tamboerskloof and Camps Bay), so the madrasah was conveniently located for parents that needed to commute to the city for work.

Notably, the madrasah administrators, principal as well as the teaching staff of Madrasah D are the same as Madrasah A (school-madrasah in Kensington-Factreton). Despite this fact, I observed a distinct difference in the ways the lessons were choreographed and how pedagogical interactions occurred in both spaces. Apart from the obvious material-spatial differences between the school and masjid settings, these differences were perceptible from the intonations of the conversations and the energies of the occupants of both spaces. In trying to understand how the spatial dynamics of the two madrasah spaces affected the learning programme, in terms of the content taught, the madrasah's rationalist ethos and approach including the application of Montessori methods, the teachers intimated that the Saturday morning classes of Madrasah D was more aligned with the pedagogical methods used at the school-madrasah.[139]

For the most part, the weekday classes at Madrasah D appeared to be more flexible, less structured and were presented as a convenient form of afterschool child-care, where the teachers often struggled to keep the children in their care interested, engaged and involved in the madrasah lessons. Notably, a substantial part of the madrasah's teaching-learning activities occur outside of the actual madrasah space and beyond the limited weekday schedule. The images below (figure 9) capture some of the regular weekend madrasah activities that include not just the madrasah children and teaching staff but typically involve parents, grandparents, siblings and other extended family members as well.[140]

[139] Conversation with senior class teacher on 14 February 2018. The Saturday morning classes had a different cohort of learners and I was urged to attend those classes by the principal and administrator since the full thrust of the learning programme and Montessori methods were said to be applied in that class rather than the weekday classes. The madrasa's social media pages are regularly updated with photos from the Saturday morning madrasah classes and of joint madrasah (both madrasah sites A and D) field trips to the beach or nature hikes. The children in these posts are captured engaged in various creative Montessori-inspired learning activities, activities which are not part of the weekday classes. The entirety of the time I spent at Madrasah D I did not observe any of the same teaching-learning methods being applied as I did at Madrasah A, in fact most of the activities at Madrasah D that I had observed, were class disruptions by late-comers (some children needing to change out of their school uniforms before joining in), preparations and movements for the late afternoon prayers and much conversational exchanges between teacher and learners on various topics, that often involved children talking about their tiredness, lack of time and busy schooling schedules and commuting time. Notably, navigating the late afternoon city traffic, contending with the high levels of noise and air pollutions was a personally exhausting experience as well, so the sentiments expressed by teachers and children were very much relatable.

[140] Images are from the madrasah's social media pages and used here with permission.

(*Fig 9*)

An integral aspect of Madrasah D's (including Madrasah A) pedagogical ethos is to incorporate madrasah lessons with field trips to the beach, nature hikes, visits to the astronomical observatory and museums. In this sense the madrasah space is multiply located. What I initially observed as a lack of teaching-learning activities in Madrasah D, was limited by my gaze of conceptualising the madrasah space as a physical space. The masjid-madrasah space is however also encountered as a discursive and affective space, where the history, politics and economics of District Six are entangled with and therefore intra-acts with how the children occupy and relate to that space. The tired bodies of young children, the daily early morning/ late afternoon family commutes to school, work and madrasah, the madrasah teachers' extended working hours and the expanded madrasah curriculum beyond the masjid space – is an important storying of Madrasah D as an entity not bounded by physical space but also mapped through memory and relational praxis. As a communal religious space for a community that is displaced and multiply-located, and where working parents and children need to commute long distances daily, where the economics of work and schooling schedules as well as limited after-school care options need to be balanced with children's religious learning requirements and maintaining historical communal connections to a space - Madrasah D's pedagogies are therefore viewed as being responsive to these lived realities.

In thinking about Madrasah D as part of a historical-material-discursive-affective space where past-present, visible-invisible, memory-reality, nature-culture binaries are collapsed several diffractive patterns co-emerge. I consider there to be important threads between the historical formations of the *nagtroepe*, Malay choirs and *slamse* language of the madrasah and the

pedagogies I observed at Madrasah D. The historical mappings of social resistance, expressions of *ordentlikheid* and religious ethos of *kanala* (mutual generosity) through the streets and sounds of District Six created nuanced forms communal relationalities. Although physically destroyed and geographically dislocated these relationalities have been affectively maintained through memorialisation of the space. In its present articulation, these historical mappings of community are implicitly recreated within the masjid-madrasah space. For example, by including the madrasah learners in the daily prayer rituals, such as performing the *iqamah* signals an inter-generational transfer of religious praxis and is one way the historical soundscapes of District Six are maintained through the madrasah space.

Another important past-present mapping of communal praxis through the madrasah space is how a *kanala* ethos of generosity is expressed through teacher-children interactions, as well as teacher-parent relationships. The ways in which the children occupied the space, often with tired bodies and hauling school and sporting bags, changing into madrasah appropriate clothing, participating in the madrasah lessons and then waiting to be collected by parents for long commutes back home – were instances met with a generous and compassionate spirit by the madrasah teachers which created an environment of communal care. The accommodating of children's lethargy and late coming/leaving, the extending of the madrasah learning program to the weekend and incorporating such into family field trips were not incidental actions, rather they are intentionally crafted pedagogical responses to a religious community displaced and responding to working class child-care concerns.

In observing teacher-children interactions I noted how certain gestures of care were tacitly communicated, for example, much of the classroom banter involved children exchanging anecdotes about their family, home or school activities or teachers recounting stories about their own childhood experiences. These conversational interactions reflected to me a rapport of familiarity, a communal spirit of mutual caring and an atmosphere of grace and compassion. Moreover, in apprising the sample of images above together with my own observational experiences at the madrasah, an important pattern of caring and tenderness emerges, a relationality that I consider to be reflective of an underlying *kanala* ethos.

These spatio-temporal encounters speak to and about how notions of child-care are closely entwined to the social functioning of *madāris* as communal spaces of care. Madrasah teachers as professional educators, as well as religious authorities and community care-workers are located at a flexible nexus where their social-educative roles are relationally defined by

particular understandings of *tarbiyyah* (child nurturance) and related ontological conditions. Threading the concept of *tarbiyyah* as part of a *kanala* ethos to the politics of child-care generally, I diffract my lenses of inquiry to consider how the labours of care-work are gendered and how this dynamic gets interpreted within the madrasah space.

The gendered work of child-care: *Kanala* as an ethic of care and community praxis

The production of childhood spaces, as Bollig and Millei (2018:6) remind us are intimately tied to modern processes of institutionalizing childhood education. Childhood learning spaces re-organise private and public spaces of care. The supervision of children, the regulating of their time and the space-bound arrangement of their learning and playing activities, the out-sourcing and out-placing of care-giving labours from the home space to the public educative space – are all entwined with and reflect broader societal concerns and economic interests. Modern welfare states, including SA are relationally invested as co-collaborators together with families in the care of children, which render childcare duties and responsibilities both a private and public concern.[141] The post-apartheid state's role in regulating how children are nurtured and cared for are mainly supportive, collaborative and interceptive in cases of abuse and neglect.

In SA the diversity of family structures and household arrangements means that child-care is variably interpreted and differently practiced. For the most part, state interventions respond to historical legacies of disrupted families, dislocated households, unequal incomes and racialized economic opportunities and prevailing forms of gender discrimination that have long-lasting effects on the upbringing and care capacities of socially disadvantaged childhoods (Prinsloo and Moletsane, 2013:9-10; Hall *et al*, 2018:22-26). Although considered non-formal and therefore outside the scope of governmental regulation, *madāris* in SA serve as important child-caring sites (Eshak: 1995; Shell: 2006; Waghid: 2011; Ebrahim: 2017). The relationalities of care that exists between child-teacher, teacher-parent and community-madrasah provides a dynamic locus for interrogating the gendered nature of that care-giving function.

The gendered politics of child care-work, in both its personal and professional iterations have been engaged from a number of perspectives. For example, global studies on gendered child-caring roles have found that women in varied socio-economic situations not only take on an

[141] Children's rights are set out in section 28 of the South African Constitution, these are interpreted in tandem with other laws and policies related to the health, education, welfare, protection and maintenance of children wherein the state assumes co-responsibility in regulating the care of children.

unequal share of child-caring responsibilities in families but spend more time than men engaging in unpaid child-caring labours which often negatively impacts upon women's abilities to access education, seek employment opportunities and often also affects their mental and physical health and well-being (Samman *et al*, 2016: 9; Rosen and Twamley, 2018:10). Others (Fennell and Arnot, 2009:9; Chilisa and Ntseane, 2010:618) have challenged dominant western liberal narratives that see women's child-caring labours through a gender deficit lens rather than a relationally empowering one. They've pointed out how women's gendered roles in the organising of family and households are considered central to African indigenous relational worlds. In many communities women's motherhood, sisterhood and communal friendship roles provide important networks of shared child-caring labours. On the other hand, some Marxist-feminist scholars have critiqued the ways in which women's child-caring work is assigned an "abjection value" that is a gendered role undervalued or devalued in "commodity-producing patriarchal" and capitalist societies (Müller:2019:3, Littler and Winch:2016) where women's care-work is publically invisiblised and underpaid as private acts of care rather than professional labour.

Child-care is ubiquitously seen as maternal, and the labours of female teachers' are often equated with the mothering roles that women perform. Feminising professional care-giving educative work also creates a dearth of caring male presences in childhood learning spaces. Heightened public anxieties of child abuse and sexual violations perpetrated by trusted male figures in places of care (Posel: 2005; Gqola: 2007; Morell *et al*: 2013; Prinsloo and Moletsane: 2013) including critiques of hegemonic forms of masculinities have contributed to increased pathologies about male-child pedagogical encounters. Some scholars like Bently (2020:2) have argued for retaining maternal links and feminisation of child-care work by noting that "nurturance, care, and love are intrinsic to foundational relationships in early childhood spaces", the terms mother, motherhood, mothering, and maternal, are considered a particular skill-set that women bring to the role. To be "professional" should not require a silencing or erasure of the overtly feminine or the mothering of the profession. Bently suggests, that in silencing the maternal, one also quietens the subjectivities and the root of power as an educator. However, this position, of course relies on the problematic assumption that capacities of care, love and nurturance are primarily feminine. Relatedly, an emerging set of conversations about fatherhoods and males as care-givers (Bristol:2015, Van Polanen *et al*: 2017*;*Van den Berg and Makusha: 2018; Francis:2018) challenge discourses that rely on negative male stereotypes as

absent, uninvolved, emotionally ill-equipped and lacking in capacity to be nurturers rather than providers.

Relating these varied notions about the gendered politics of child-care to my observations at Madrasah D specifically and *madāris* generally, I expand on some of the traditional understandings of *tarbiyyah* and childhood gendered pedagogies that were mapped out in chapter three. Locating these understandings within the socio-historical context of District Six I consider some of the gendered patterns that emerges from the pedagogies of care observed at Madrasah D. An Islamic pedagogical relationship is generally conceptualised around a triumvirate of practices that includes *tarbiyyah* (child nurturance), *ta'līm* (religious instruction) and *ta'dīb* broadly translated as moral training (Waghid: 2011; Sahin: 2018; Davids and Waghid: 2021). The role of child-caring is spread across a range of socially vested actors that involve parental duties (*ḥuqūq al wālidayn*) as well as a broader communal or societal responsibility (*fard kifayah*) of care-taking (Moosa: 2012). The task of religiously educating a Muslim child includes relationships of care, formulas for nurturing, disciplining and guiding children into a set of social and spiritual practices, ritual observances and refining their moral deportments and ethical repertoires.

Traditionally, the roles, responsibilities and recipients of *tarbiyyah* have been filtered through a male scholarly purview (Ayubi: 2019b) so in most Islamic textual archives about *tarbiyyah* girls and women's roles are either absent or invisiblised and subsumed into a domestic role rather than an educative one. Contemporary re-visioning of these *tarbiyyah* roles have creatively presented a more gender inclusive reading of this tradition (Waghid: 2011; Ahmed: 2013; Ebrahim:2017) however many of these revisions do not necessarily interrogate and problematize the gendered and classed assumptions that inform *tarbiyyah* practices, they merely insert excluded representations into an existing body of knowledge. Others (Hoel: 2016; Khoja-Moolji: 2018; Ayubi: 2019b, 2020) however have offered more careful and critical engagements with this traditional legacy and pointed out how epistemologies of gender and gendered roles in Islam inform not only *tarbiyyah* understandings but also reinforce idealised notions of femininity and masculinities through pedagogical relationships.

In recounting the past-present continuities of the District Six community and locating the madrasah-masjid space as part of that mapping, certain historical gendered codes of the community (such as those marked by notions of *ordentlikheid* and an ethic of *kanala*) are noted to be reflected in the pedagogical relationships of care within the madrasah space. The

interactions between the male and female teachers, that I was privy to that is, suggested a space of mutual professional respect. It was evident from the types of investments that the madrasah made in the further training of both its male and female teachers, and in the ways that teaching was regarded as involving a community of carers rather than a hierarchal relationship where teachers are the authority or that their roles are limited to classroom schedules. For example, the teaching staff all attend a Montessori teacher training course, they regularly participate in Islamic conferences, seminars and workshops and the madrasah also arranges educational opportunities for the parents and extended family members of the children as well, such as fire safety demonstrations, weekend sleepovers under stars and encounters with snow on the mountains. These are aspects that stood out particularly, as in its practical articulation, *tarbiyyah* was understood and approached in ways that far exceeded a formal educative relationship.

Furthermore, the types of pedagogical relationships I observed at Madrasah D presented particular iterations of care work that reflected an inspiring example of Muslim masculinities that was not premised on dominant notions of overt manliness. Rather, as the images above (figure 9) depict, caring labours are regarded as part of a collective communal effort, besides capturing the countenances of tenderness between teacher and children, the overarching sentiment reflected in these optics is one where nature-culture, male-female, adult-child, community-madrasah binaries are collapsed. I consider this dynamic as reflecting a communal ethic of *kanala* where generosity and kindness are expressed through a sharing of experiences and sharing in the broader considerations of children's upbringing. It is especially significant that given the ontological contexts of a displaced community, a masjid-madrasah space amidst rubble of past destruction and present gentrification construction – *tarbiyyah* praxis is not limited to the spatialities of the madrasah space, or just the relationship between teachers-children, rather it is expanded in important ways both spatially and pedagogically.

Moreover, given prevailing forms of toxic masculinities that plagues our communities and heightens existing anxieties about male-child interactions, children's learning worlds are increasingly being depreciated and impoverished by the absence of positive male presences in that inform and shape their learning spaces. What the teachers at Madrasah B together with the involvement of fathers and other male members of the family as part of the pedagogical relationship offers is a model for thinking about childhood nurturance or *tarbiyyah* as essentially a shared labour of care. The madrasah therefore provided a critical communal space that accommodated for childhoods been, being and their becomings.

5.3. Cartographies of Affluence: The Bush Gave way to Orchids, and Homes and Businesses[142]

Madrasah C that I refer to as an institutionalised or formal madrasah is located in Rylands Estate, a predominately Indian suburb on the Cape Flats. Of the four *madāris* that I spent time at, Madrasah C is organisationally the most structured, better resourced and also the largest in terms of number of children and in its physical dimensions and infrastructural layout. The madrasah forms part of a masjid complex situated within a business district of the suburb. The masjid design is architecturally prominent and aesthetically distinctive in relation to its surrounding landscape. It is amply resourced with a library, gift shop, auditorium, multiple ablution stations, a kitchen prep area, an office block and an octagonal domed courtyard in the centre, there is also ample parking making it easy to access the premises. In addition to the luxuriously carpeted main prayer area which is located on the ground floor for males and an upper level for females, there are ten generously sized madrasah classrooms located both upstairs and downstairs. The madrasah classes are conducted during weekday afternoons between 15h45-17h45 and classes range from form R (children under 6 years) to form eight (high school learners). The madrasah follows a set syllabus which was designed in 1997 by a madrasah textbook committee together with a team of human resource experts and qualified teachers (Mohamed, 2012: 270-271). The madrasah syllabus comprises of textbooks, activity books and workbooks, which leaners need to purchase for each successive year. The textbooks include subjects related to ritual worship, doctrine, moral training, history, daily invocations and Arabic reading. The language, style, content and activities for each subject increases in complexity for each subsequent level.

Separate to the children's weekday madrasah classes, the masjid also holds a number of adult Islamic learning courses during weekday mornings and evenings and over weekends which are hosted by various affiliated organizations. The *imām* of the masjid also holds a hugely popular weekly morning women's *ḥajj* class that draws hundreds of women from all over the Cape Flats. Additionally the masjid's ladies council which was formed in 1992 organises various programmes such as a weekly women's *dhikr jamāt* (prayer gathering) and a weekly charitable soup-kitchen (Gamieldien, 2004:68). The masjid complex serves as a vibrant communal

[142] This sub-heading is borrowed from a phrase used in Dhupelia-Mesthrie's (2014:10) *Speaking about Building Rylands (1960s-1990s): A Cape Flats History.*

discursive space where many dignitaries, politicians, international scholars and other public personalities are regularly invited as guest speakers.

My commute to and from the madrasah as well as within the madrasah space felt especially familiar as it was a neighbourhood and masjid I regularly frequented. I had previously spent a number of years as a student at the Islamic college located on the premises, I am also a regular user of the onsite library and I am familiar with a number of the madrasah teachers, some of whom were former students and/or colleagues of mine. Importantly, the masjid is also significant for me personally since it is the very first time almost thirty years ago that I, as an adult woman, had ever entered a masjid space and experienced praying as part of a congregation. This personal and previous relationship to the masjid (but not the madrasah itself) had several diffractive effects in how I encountered the space. My observations of the children and the madrasah choreographies were simultaneously filtered through a lens of familiarity but also with a heightened sense of attentiveness. My researcher's gaze opportuned a renewed alertness of and vigilance towards how children's movements and intra-actions were co-ordinated and synchronised to the materialities of the space. I paid careful attention to the implicit and explicit ways the architectural design and layout of the physical spaces diverted how the space was occupied. The masjid walls and other material artefacts, I noted, demarcated space and place in particularly nuanced ways. It is to these material-discursive-affective space encounters through which I interrogate some of the gendered patterns that help story the spatialities of Madrasah C and Muslim childhoods within this particular context.

Rylands Estate on the Cape Flats materialised in 1951 as one of two areas identified (the other area Cravenby is located further away from the city) to relocate the minority "Indian" population of the Cape following the apartheid Group Areas Act of 1950. Many Cape Indian Muslims resided in District Six and had up until the 1980s been shunted around to various surrounding areas before relocating to Rylands Estate (Dawood, 1993: 99; Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2014:6). Originally a white owned farm land called Doornhoogte, Rylands area pre-apartheid was mostly uninhabitable with no municipal amenities such as roads, street lights or sewerage system; the area was also surrounded by shanty living spaces that informally housed black and coloured families. Whilst most dispossessed groups were relocated to various areas on the Cape Flats in low-cost council flats, the relocation of Indians to Rylands Estate had no similar mass low-cost municipal housing scheme and residents had to either build their own homes, or rent from wealthier Indian landlords that could afford to purchase multiple properties.

Although the historical footprints of Indian Muslims in the Cape are traced to Dutch slaves and prisoners that arrived in the Cape during the 1700s from various seaports along the South Asiatic, East African and the Indian Oceans; the main trajectory of Indian presences in South Africa was as part of an indentured labour force brought by the British in 1860 to Natal. Followed by a second stream of mainly Indian Muslim traders that settled in various outlying areas in Natal, the former Transvaal as well as Cape provinces. Indian traders were subject to a different set of legislation than that which governed Indian indentured labourers and were thus able to move and settle in different regions of the country. During the early 1900s a number of Indian Muslim traders settled in the Cape seeking economic opportunities. Colonial immigration laws required that Indian traders (as well as other migrant communities such as Greeks, Chinese and Russian Jews) be able to speak English, be literate and have a means of support (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2014b: 642). This opened avenues for Indian nationals to engage in commerce, peddle goods, open shops and other retail businesses and also enabled them to purchase and own property. This created a risky relationality of dependency that often relied on bribery of and complicity with bureaucratic powers (Dawood, 1993: 13-15).

Less affluent South Indian migrants also settled in the Cape for work opportunities in the hospitality sector as waiters, cooks in restaurants and hotels, which signalled the class, regional and economic differences among Indians in the Cape. Describing the incursion of Indians in the Cape, as a process of “chain immigration” where Indian traders relied on village networks that helped them to secure jobs and provide accommodation in the Cape, Dawood (1993:7) notes that the early community of Indians were mainly merchant upper-middle class who arrived with capital resources that set them apart not only from an indentured class of Indians but also the rest of the Muslims in the Cape.

Indian immigration patterns had significant implications for gender relations and sexual norms within the community, since most Indian traders did not migrate together with their wives and/or children who were very often left behind in villages in India or arrived only once a business and home was secured. Many Indian women also resisted leaving their family home and village networks in India, and often suffered long periods of separation from their husbands. These women risked abandonment if their husbands did not return back to India after establishing businesses or entered into polygynous marriages with local coloured or Malay women (Dhupelia-Mesthrie: 2013, 2014b). As Dhupelia-Mesthrie (2014b: 639-640) notes, little has been documented about the sexual lives of migrant Indian males that often had to

spend years in host countries without their wives. Such men's lives are generally portrayed as pursuing business enterprises and engaging in political struggles but are rarely seen as sexual beings, their masculinity, she notes, is defined only in the public sphere. Whilst indentured males' sexualities have always been subjected to government regulation and historical scrutiny, the intimate lives of Indian traders are less known. An indentured class of mainly male migrant workers living in single-sex quarters and a trader class of wealthy Indian men living in split or shared housing that focuses only on their historical struggles of economic survival tends to gloss over conversations about how such circumstances may have mediated attitudes about male sexuality and gender roles, since instances of stranger intimacies, homosexual or heterosexual encounters are rarely documented (ibid).

Similarly, historiographical records tend to understate Indian women as a part of a domestic background story to Indian trader's successes and wealth accumulation, rather than progenitors of affluence and community-makers. Indian women that have settled in the Cape (and other regions) have however demonstrated tenacious capacities of adaptation (Dhupelia-Mesthrie: 2012). Their business prowess and charitable dispositions although not always highlighted in the annals of South African Indian histories, their intimate lives are archived through inter-generational forms of gendered praxis rather than public visibility.

As a cultural and ethnic minority in the Cape, Indians adopted an insularised work-family life ethic, they opened several convenience stores in working class neighbourhoods around the city which operated for longer working hours than other retail outlets and provided an important means for monthly/weekly low waged labourers to purchase daily essentials on credit. Often living in homes adjoined to their stores, Indian traders depended mainly on the unremunerated labours of family members to survive. The common characterisation of an Indian trader's wife as *mochie*[143] is attributed to the fact that Indian-owned corner stores found in most Cape neighbourhoods are almost always family-run with the wife attending to the business and seeing to young children at the same time, older boy children helping out in the shop stores after school, whilst daughters taking on domestic chores of cooking and cleaning at home. Notably, immigration laws prevented Indians from training and working in artisanal and related industries that were reserved for coloureds/ Malays in the Cape. The commercial sector thus provided Indian trading families with a level of economic independence, since their business

[143] The term *mochi* is derived from an Indian caste system category that refers to skilled artisans who enjoy higher social rank than those that do menial labour, in Cape Town however the term has been adopted to refer to the wives' of Indian business-owners (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2012: 169).

model relied on “credit networks” whereby kinship ties to other traders from home villages in India helped raise capital and provide interest-free loans to purchase property and start-up new businesses (Dawood, 1993: 59-63).

The notion of “community” in the Cape Indian context of community-building is often filtered through specific class interests, gendered hierarchies and other discriminatory attitudes such as colourism and regional elitism. Social stratifications of the Indian caste system and class divisions although displaced in South Africa was not necessarily replaced, it merely operated in more subtle ways. For example, Dawood’s (1993:2) research on the history of Cape Indian Muslims and the internal politics of community building relied mainly on oral testimonies of Indian community members, she notes the social barriers in accessing female informants since the women she approached were either reluctant to share their stories, or considered their own contributions to community and family businesses as unimportant in relation to the patriarchs of the family. Male interviewees, she noted, “refused to grant permission” for female family members to participate in the research study. A similar experience was noted by Dhupelia-Mesthrie (2014a:5; 2014b: 637) in her research on the Hindu, Tamil and Muslim communities in Rylands during 1960s-1980s. These gendered dynamics are suggestive of prevailing cultural norms about Indian social and class sensibilities entangled with conservative approaches to religion compounded by the country’s racial politics.

Rylands as a racialized space created by apartheid laws saw the emergence of “Indianess” as a nexus for building community, which according to Dhupelia-Mesthrie (2013:46; 2014a:4) led to a “surge of cultural and religious activity” that were also underpinned by internal class, caste, religious and ideological signatures of the community. For example, the Habibia Primary school, a community school for Muslim children, was built in 1946 by the descendants of a Sufi forebear as part of a broader charitable ethos, this included a masjid, madrasah and *khanqa* (benevolent Sufi communal space). The Ghandi Memorial centre, an afternoon Gujarati school for Hindu children built in 1947 as well as several Tamil communal spaces of worship and learning (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2013:50). These initiatives help institutionalise the religious footprints of the community and also cemented a sense of Indian place-belonging in Rylands. The first state school however was only established in 1976, initially called Rylands Indian High School. A racialized naming that caused much Indian-coloured hostility since Indians had previously attended schools in coloured areas, a contravention of apartheid group area policies that favoured Indian children over coloured children (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2014a:11).

Also children borne from intermarriages between Indian Muslims and Malays blurred the ethnic absolutism suggestive in the naming of a public school as Indian, and was therefore subsequently dropped. Notably the demographics of Rylands high school has not shifted post-apartheid, despite desegregation of schools Indians and Malays still make up the majority of student body (Lemon and Battersby-Lennard, 2009: 525; Battersby and Lemon, 2009: 83) which is indicative of the insularised character of the community.

The role and contributions of women in Ryland's community-building efforts and its religious development was central yet understated. For example, the first Tamil temple in Rylands, the Siva Aalaya established in 1976, as well as the Hindu Samaj Centre and Vishnu Mandir was mainly funded through women's groups cooking savouries or sewing garments and selling them over weekends to other neighbourhoods (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2014a:12). Class divisions between the wealthier trader class and the mainly Tamil working class also meant that Tamil women were more politically active in labour and housing campaigns than women from more affluent families that did not work outside of family-owned business or owned residential property (Dawood, 1993:83). Although historically Cape Indian political stances had mainly been passive due to the constant threat of deportation, there were also emerging pockets of anti-apartheid political consciousness within the community (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2013:49). As in other regions where Indian communities settled, their relative affluence when compared to black and coloured population located Indians at an ambiguous nexus between being perceived as benefitting from white economic power structures and as part of a collective resistance to those powers (ibid). Historically, the Indian community straddled between political apathy or a conciliatory approach towards the apartheid government and actively resisting it.[144]

[144] An example of this concessionary attitude is the development of the Oriental Plaza, a retail shopping centre constructed for Indian traders that lost their businesses in the destruction of District Six, a similar shopping complex was developed in Fordsburg in the mid-1970s for Indian traders that were displaced by the group areas forced removals from Pageview's 14th Street in the former Transvaal. The Oriental Plaza in both locations emerged as part of the apartheid government extending economic opportunities towards the Indian merchant class, opportunities that were not available to black and coloured communities. Indian pandering to post-apartheid government for personal gain is noted by the infamy of the Indian Gupta family and their corrupt business dealings with the ANC led government, who leveraged their connections with the South African government through bribery and other forms of state capture to amass personal wealth. The scale of such corrupt dealings and the looting of state resources, although not unprecedented since much of the country's resources were similarly looted by white capitalists with legal sanction during apartheid, has nonetheless been a divisive blight and added to ongoing racial and economic tensions in the country https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/us-blacklists-gupta-family-over-widespread-corruption-20191010 article posted 10 October 2019 (accessed 12 January 2021). On the other hand, many members of the South African Indian community are notable stalwarts of the country's liberation struggle and have occupied key public service positions including legal, business, medical, academic and charitable fields. Such varying instances feeds into the ambiguous lenses through which Indian citizenship in South Africa are viewed.

Inter-marriages between Indian and Malay Muslims in the Cape have diffused certain theological and ethnic tensions and are therefore less pronounced than in other regions of South Africa. Also, *masājid* and *madāris* in Rylands were often aligned to particular Sufi orders, who were instrumental in creating the spiritual and communal tone of Indian Islam in the Cape. Madrasah C was established during the 1980s as a generative religious space at the height of Rylands community-building activities and amidst rising anti-apartheid voices and broadening social consciousness particularly amongst second generation Indians in South Africa.

Of particular relevance to the diffractive lenses I apply, is to consider how the materialities of Madrasah C as part of an agentive and epistemic ecosystem participates in the gendered storying of the space. Delving into the historical and political entanglements of building *masājid*/ *madāris* in the Cape I pay attention to how multiple material-discursive factors intra-act to co-create a storyboard of Muslim childhood spatialities. *Masājid* and *madāris* are important social artifacts not only for the purposes they serve, that is congregational worship and religious teaching-learning, but as sentient diagrams of Muslim social relationalities. Masjid and madrasah buildings are public displays of Islam as a living tradition that visually map Muslim presences onto geographical space.

The historiography of masjid architecture in the Cape provides an edifying lens from which to assess a range of material-discursive entanglements. Masjid and/or madrasah buildings hold stories of socio-economic conditions of a community, the austerity, grandeur and aesthetic influences reveal particular signatures of class and culture. The types of materials used, where and how such materials are sourced, locations and the politics of land possession and dispossession, the artisanal craftship, creative skills and labours involved in its construction, environmental considerations, layout design, decorative and functional features and so forth are not incidental factors of buildings - rather they constitute key ontological elements of the madrasah space.

Hirsch's (2014:52) study on the architectural imprints of Islam onto the Cape landscape noted that most *masājid* in the Cape were constructed by Muslim builders and artisans that learned their craft and developed skills by working for colonial masters. Hence the material features of earlier Cape *masājid* tend to mirror Dutch and Victorian designs, it is only later built masjid spaces that amalgamated design influences from the rest of the Islamic world. Most Muslim artisans who were skilled in limestone plastering techniques used in Cape Dutch styled buildings replicated the same design in masjid construction, also wooden gables that were used

for minarets closely resembled Dutch church steeples. Often, straitened Muslim communities rely on builders or congregational members to work voluntarily or at cost over weekends, construction progress or masjid upgrades depend on community fundraising efforts and they often need to make do with materials that are easy to source. The Islamic architectural aesthetic of the Cape is therefore also an important historical telling of the kinds of economic limitations and social conditions "imposed" upon the Muslim community (Todescini: 2003) as much as it reveals the creativity and resourcefulness of a community to adapt and materially carve out their religious spaces and places onto the Cape landscape.

The establishment of Madrasah C and the masjid complex in the early 1980s, although not the first or largest masjid and madrasah built in Rylands was nevertheless distinguished for several reasons. For one, the purchase of the land for the proposed masjid site was funded by a wealthy businessman from the community. Secondly and related to this altruistic backing, no expense was spared in the construction and design elements of the masjid complex. Thirdly, the masjid's ethos is sampled upon creating a collaborative educational and worship space that is attuned with and responsive to global and local Muslim socio-political issues, and one that engages in robust religious scholarly debates (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2014a:12-13).

Considered from a historical-material-discursive perspective, Madrasah C stands out as the first masjid in the Cape to be designed and built by qualified architects and structural engineers, or to use internationally acclaimed artists, artisans and calligraphers for its decorative elements. It was also the first instance of a masjid in the Cape to erect a dome in a style that pays homage to the 7th century masjid site in Jerusalem's holy city of Al-Quds (Hirsch, 2014:292- 293) which is both a religiously symbolic and politically provocative statement on Palestinian solidarity. Moreover, the masjid-madrasah follows a rich Islamic civilizational heritage of libraries being a central part of a masjid space (Adams, 2003:38). Historically, practically and symbolically, masjid-libraries signal an important pedagogical shift from teaching-learning Islam as an oral tradition to a literary one. It also affirms the relationalities between ritual acts of prayer and acts of learning as part of the masjid's socio-religious purpose. So the inclusion of a library as part of the masjid- madrasah space reflects an underlying ethos of intellectualism, liberal thought and scholarly persuasion of the masjid's (and madrasah) management board.

In the context of Rylands, this mapping of a vibrant discursive communal space for Muslims is an intentional enterprise to mark out the masjid-madrasah as an important platform for social engagement and community-building. The octagonal courtyard in the centre of the masjid-

madrasah space is also another purposefully added feature. Parker (2009:11-12) points out, the courtyard area of a *masjid* represents a transitional space, it at once recognises the social role of *masājid* while at the same time distinguishes between the contemplativeness of prayer spaces and the spaces for worldly discussions and for congregants socialising. The courtyard thus serves that communal purpose, it also represents a transition space between the ablution area and the prayer space to create an ambience of a socially engaged sacred space and to also direct those engagements purposefully through its architectural design.

An instructive lens to materially and discursively map how such social engagements are intended to occur within the masjid space, is to note the ways in which understandings of gender gets incorporated into an "Islamic" architectural and spatializing discourse. Cape Town masjid architect Parker (2009: 8-9) for example refers to a concept of *mashrabiyya*[145] as the "architecture of the veil" a design principle of privacy used for marking off intimate and public spaces. Screens or barriers, according to Parker, signifies an ordering of space and society, although, he acknowledges that there are no particular prescribed gendered spaces in Islamic architecture (much less for designing and organising the masjid space). Notably, Parker's is not an uncommon sentiment about Muslim women's space and place within the *masjid* and society generally, it is just one that locates the argument within a broader discussion on Islamic architectural design rather than a juristic position. Walls, screens and other such barriers provide the epistemological sites through which gender gets enacted. Madrasah C, as with many other masjid spaces often have variously interpreted forms of *mashrabiyya* as part of their spatial design and gendered ordering of space. I discuss some of my observations hereunder.

Designing gendered space: *mashrabiyya* as architectural metaphor

My time spent at Madrasah C involved a routine of reporting to the principal's office on arrival, where the principal would direct me to a different class (this so that I would have a chance to observe different age groups of children at the madrasah). At each visit, the *athān* for the late -afternoon prayers would sound, at which point the teachers would stop their lessons and

[145] The design concept of *mashrabiyya* also referred to as *rushān* or *shamshūl* are commonly used in Arab architecture as windows or screens in upper floors of buildings, it includes elaborate wooden latticework and stained glass to control light and air. The concept dates back to the 12th century Baghdad of the Abbasid caliphate as it was used extensively in that period in palaces and public buildings. It is also a design feature commonly associated with the wealthier classes as an ornamental decorative preference since the cost, time and skill involved made it less affordable for the general masses. https://arabiclanguageculture.com/2019/07/31/mashrabiyya-tradition-design-and-sustainability/ (accessed 10 January 2021).

prepare their classes for the prayer. This involved, what appeared to be a carefully practiced routine, where the children would line-up outside their classrooms into two rows of boys and girls. The girls in the upstairs classrooms remained upstairs together with the youngest boys from the form R class, whilst the rest of the boys went downstairs to the main prayer space. The same would apply to the downstairs classrooms, the girls would come upstairs to pray whilst the boys would join the main congregation space downstairs. The downstairs prayer space would always include a large number of male congregants from the public. After the prayers, the children would return to their respective classrooms, except on Tuesdays and Thursdays when all the children in the madrasah including the teachers (male and female) would move to the ladies prayer section upstairs for practical lessons on how to perform the prayer. In these lessons the boys, including the youngest group (Form R class) would form one row in the front whilst the girls (who made up a majority of the learner body) would line up in multiple rows behind the boys. During these practical lessons, the children would recite the prayers aloud whilst the teachers would either stand to the side or walk in between the children correcting their postures or prompting children on the prayer wordings.

I noted at each of these practical prayer lessons, the teachers or other girls would continuously fuss around with either their own or other girls' headscarves, since the girls' hair coverings would inevitably shift during the prayer and few stray hairs would peek out at the corners, or girls with longer hair would have their bottom hair exposed whilst performing the bowing and prostrating movements of the prayer. I noted my own sense of annoyance at the consistency at which the young girls would constantly be interrupted by the teachers, or when girls would interrupt the girls in the front of them to adjust their head-coverings. It appeared to me to be a kind of pathos about not only the visibility of young girls' hair, but also around how they stood, bowed and sat during the prayers. The same attention to correcting postures or fussing about with clothing, I noted, was not given to any of the boy children. I felt a similar sense of annoyance when noting the ease with which males (child and adult) entered and occupied "female" designated prayer spaces, yet there seemed to be a tacit understanding that the reverse was not allowed, or it never occurred in my presence. I ardently highlighted these choreographies in my field notes, since I regarded such as useful data for my study evidencing precisely how the madrasah space was gendered and how gender was performed in this space.

Not discounting the clear instances that I had observed of young girls being subjected to different forms of bodily censure than the boy children of the madrasah, I also reflexively

considered how or if my sense of annoyance was heightened by my own gendered experiences of not just this particular space but at almost every public prayer space I have encountered. I reflected on the gendered ways that most masjid spaces are designed and how walls and other material barriers participate in the gendering of space. For example, the welcoming "main" entrances reserved for male congregants that stand in stark contrast to the often sparse and unsuitable spaces allocated for female congregants (if at all). Also, how the acoustics and visibility of the *imām* is almost always differentially mapped within masjid spaces, where preference of prime space, better sound and clearer visuals caters to the male prayer experience and not females. Women (and their young children) often have to contend with an unwelcoming and/or distancing reception, many times in unsuitable make-shift or shoddily constructed balcony spaces. The *mimbar* (speaker platform) is an exclusively male-claimed space in most masājid. [146]

The debate of women's access to and positioning within the masjid space has long been a point of contention for Islamic feminist scholars (Hoel: 2013; Lehmann: 2012; Reda: 2004; Shaikh: 1994). [147] These critiques have ranged from challenging legal arguments that restrict women's rights to congregational prayer and limiting their leadership positions and authoritative voices as part of the sociality of the masjid space. It includes contesting the historical and cultural biases through which Islamic gender norms are interpreted and also rejecting dominant patriarchal readings of scriptural texts that infantilise and subjugate women's social roles and intellectual contributions. Holding a parallel critique to these positions, Islamic feminists scholars have also resisted liberal secular feminist and /or islamophobic constructions of

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[146] For example, the online site Side Entrance https://sideentrance.tumblr.com/about documents Muslim women's masjid experiences by uploading photos of the sub-par masjid spaces that many are made to enter through and pray in. This equal access movement was started in 2012 by American scholar-activist Hind Makki, who notes that a friend was "berated and nearly kicked out of her mosque for daring to pray in the half-used 2nd floor of a multi-million dollar mosque, behind the male congregants. She prayed upstairs because the women's area in the basement was hot, loud and mouldy". This photographic archive confirms that the issue of unequal and inadequate women's prayers spaces is by design and not as many argued due to lack of funds, space and/or juristic difference. https://www.patheos.com/blogs/altmuslim/2012/07/wheres-my-space-to-pray-in-this-mosque/ uploaded 27 July 2012 (accessed 13 January 2021).

[147] In South Africa, particularly in regions that have a concentration of Indian Muslims that fall under the conservative *jamiat,* the prevailing juristic position holds that females are not allowed to pray in the masjid. Since the early 1990s there have been several campaigns for women's equal access to the masjid. Increasingly newer masjids that are no longer restricted by apartheid group areas and fall outside of the *jamiat* strongholds have started to include women's areas in their masjid designs. However for the most part, these spaces have not reached the objective of spatial equality https://mg.co.za/article/2018-06-15-00-women-of-waqf-start-a-movement/ In Cape Town, *masājid* generally do have female access, these spaces range from adequate to dismal, however women remain excluded from participating equally in terms of holding leadership positions (notable exceptions are the Claremont Main Road Masjid in Cape Town, and Masjidus Salam in Brixton who do have women deliver the Friday prayer pre-*Khutbah* (sermon) ritual).

agency that tend to present Muslim women as voiceless, inherently oppressed or without agency (Mahmood: 2001a, 2001b, 2005; Mohanty: 2003, 2013; Seedat: 2016, Khoja-Moolji:2018). Arguing that such constructions not only rely on narrowed notions of agency that are implicitly tied to capitalist ideals of individuality, liberty, freedom and personal volition but are also based on conceptual prisms that fail to recognise women's agential capacities that are located within religious praxis and spiritual modes. For example, European nations that have imposed bans on Muslim women's and young girls' choices to dress and cover their bodies not only restrict their freedom but deny them agency afforded through these choices. These constructions are often politically and economically charged and feed into a narrative of negative stereotypes of and associations with the *hijāb* and Muslim women's faith praxis. Alternatively, such constructs are also objectified or commodified (often by Muslims themselves) and participate in capitalist economies by presenting the *hijāb* or Muslim notions of modesty as marketable artefacts and fashionable trends. Orientalist tropes that fetishize and exotify Muslim women through sexualised imaginaries of the *niqāb* (face veil) as mysterious and seductive that renders them both visible and invisible, accessible and inaccessible is another problematic misuse of the concept of *mashrabiyya.* Similarly, when couched in orthodox, neo-traditional or even decolonial rhetoric, modesty tied to gender often becomes the locus of much patriarchal posturing. The rhetoric of *mashrabiyya* as a way of offering women privacy and sanctuary away from any unwanted male / colonial gaze, presents gender segregation as if it favours women's experience by protecting her modesty and honouring her presence within and outside the masjid. Such types of defensive and apologetic responses to anti-Islam / anti-tradition charges tend to gloss over or deride any critical engagement about Islamic gender issues as westernised, and/ or neo-colonial infiltration. In thinking about *mashrabiyya* as part of Muslim childhood spatialities, it is not my intention to rehash these debates, except to note the multivocality of Islamic feminist positions and to stress the contested gendered terrain wherein Islamic notions of privacy, seclusion, honour, modesty are located.

In grappling with my annoyances at some of the gendered choreographies I observed at Madrasah C, and considering the fact that the masjid complex is relatively accommodating and receptive to female presences - I carefully reflected on the types of material and discursive labours the notion of *mashrabiyya* performs as part of an Islamic pedagogical space. The women's prayer section at Madrasah C, it should be noted, is spacious and well ventilated, the *mashrabiyya* screens that divide the space are beautifully and intricately decorated and the

glass divisions allows for both visual and auditory access to the main prayer space. On certain occasions, women do occupy the "male" prayer space, although not to perform congregational prayers, rather as a temporary logistical use of the space for special occasions when males are usually not present such as women's *dhikr* gathering or a female-only lecture program.

For example, the image below (figure 10)[148] of the masjid's weekly morning "housewives madrasah" class engaged in a *mawlid* celebration evocatively captures women's occupation of the masjid space. The women's white attire, the flowers, the serenity and orderly arrangement of almost two thousand ladies facing towards the *miḥrab* (the concave in the front facing wall indicating the *qiblah* or prayer direction) create a powerful sense of ordered luminosity. The *imām* of the masjid together with an invited male guest speaker and a few of his male entourage seated at the helm (out of focus in this particular image) including the male videographer and few media personnel are the only male presences in an otherwise demarcated *female* space. Similar images of such female-friendly masjid events are regularly published in the media and used as promotional material for the masjid-madrasah as well as uploaded onto the invited guest speakers' social media profiles. These images participate in creating a visualisation of the masjid as a gender neutral space, a space where women's presences are celebrated and the feminised flare on display presents the notion of *mashrabiyya* in an especially positive light rather than limiting or restrictive.

(*Fig 10)*

[148] Image uploaded on the Voice of the Cape 91. 3 FM's Facebook page on 4 February 2020 https://web.facebook.com/VOC91.3fm/posts/10157044075132794 (accessed 13 August 2020).

In diffractively thinking with and about the notion of *mashrabiyya* as part of the spatialities of Madrasah C, I also considered the types of gendering labours images such as the one above performs in storying the masjid-madrasah space as part of a public imaginary. Walls and other barriers exist as both physical and symbolic entities that divide the space and delineate positions of authority and power, divisions that are invariably gendered even when the physical barriers are removed (as they are in the image above). Within the masjid space, this spatial ordering is acutely represented by the *mimbar,* a physical platform that visibilises and amplifies voices of religious authority. A traditional symbolic space exclusively occupied by males, it spatially maps how the relationalities of gendered power are organised in this space. A less visible ordering of the masjid-madrasah space is the role that management, trustees and/or operational powers hold in determining who and how those voices are amplified within the masjid space, how and when gendered divisions or *mashrabiyya* will be applied or even when such barriers can be relaxed within the space. This role is often one determined by an ethic of servitude, or an Islamic notion of *fard kifayah* (communal obligation) as it is one determined by the controlling hands of affluence and social power within a particular community. *Mashrabiyya* or the gendered ordering of the masjid-madrasah space is therefore ontologically also a story about the relationality of power.

An apt example is noted from an incident that occurred in 2019. The masjid as well as several other Muslim organisations and *madāris* in Cape Town invited well-known international celebrity figure Nouman Ali Khan as a special guest speaker. Khan, who in 2017 was accused of sexual predatory behaviour and spiritual abuse by a panel of investigators in the USA was deemed by many in the community as unwelcome.[149] A group of Muslim activists appealed to the local organisers to reconsider the invitation to platform a known predator and to not allow an ethically compromised figure to occupy the sanctified space of *mimbar*, particularly in light of the fact that many female congregants are often victims of such abuses themselves. Drawing attention to fact that the masjid space is considered a sacred space, and should necessarily offer a place of sanctuary and sanctity for all congregants, especially those rendered most vulnerable. Despite these impassioned appeals, the masjid executive board took the decision to not revoke

[149] Several local media reported on this issue https://www.thedailyvox.co.za/mosquemetoo-nouman-ali-khan-invited-as-guest-to-cape-town-mosque/ *#MosqueMeToo; Nouman Ali Khan invited as Guest to Cape Town Mosque* article by Shaazia Ebrahim and Fatima Moosa uploaded 3 May 2019 (accessed 29 July 2019). http://alqalam.co.za/nouman-ali-khan-does-not-deserve-public-platforms-in-south-africa/ *Nouman Ali Khan does not deserve public platforms in South Africa* article by Shubnam Palesa Mohamed uploaded 29 April 2019 (accessed 29 July 2019).

their invitation and further used the *mimbar* space and the Friday ritual sermon to justify their decision.[150] The decision raised important questions about how issues of gender are navigated within the masjid space, how powerful males' unethical behaviours are excused or overlooked and more importantly, how those in power misuse their positions within the masjid-madrasah space to filter, silence and diffract women's voices.[151]

This incident occurred during a period of intensified national conversations around the high levels of women and child sexual abuse in SA. Within the Muslim community these conversations focused on the prevailing culture of complicity that exists within religious spaces, where religious leaders who commit such violations are rarely held to account. By invoking sentiments of privacy such issues are often kept hidden from public discourse. *Madāris*, and male madrasah teachers in particular who have been identified as perpetrators of sexual abuse have their positions of authority and assumptions of propriety to carry out their crimes, they also rely on sentiments of secrecy about such issues as a protectionism against public censure.[152]

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[150] Between 5April - 26 April 2019 the masjid used part of the Friday *Khutbah* (sermon) to defend the decision of inviting Nouman Ali Khan. For example, on the live broadcast of the *Khutbah* dated 5 April 2019, the speaker Shaykh Dr Achmat Salie noted that the slander against Nouman Ali Khan was part of a Zionist and islamophobic ploy to deride the reputations of Islamic scholars like Khan. He further noted that those that are raising objections to his invitation are part of a feminist movement, accusing them of being "women of no good character" and "immoral" and suggests that the entire *#MeToo* campaign enables any women to make false allegations against prominent men https://web.facebook.com/MasjidulQuds/videos/340631823248625 (statements from 27min:01sec, accessed 19 January 2021). During the *khutbah* on 26 April 2019 the *imām* justified their support of the celebrity by claiming Khan was innocent at first, then shifted positions claiming Khan had repented for his sins and the public should forgive his trespasses (the live broadcast has subsequently been deleted from the masjid's social media pages, I do however have a personal voice recording of the *Khutbah).* A few months following Khan's visit and after a particularly violent week of numerous heinous instances of gender-based violence in South Africa, that included the rape and murder of 19 year old UCT student Uyinene Mrwetyane on 24 August 2019 at her local post-office, the *mimbar* was once again used to declare the masjid's anti-gender violence positions https://web.facebook.com/MasjidulQuds/videos/516520715825037 (the khutbah entitled *#enough is enough* announcement on GBV was broadcasted live 6 September 2019). During the *Khutbah* an alarm was performatively sounded after every few seconds as a reminder of the fact that a woman and/or child is sexually abused, killed or victim to toxic forms of masculinity in South Africa every minute of the day.

[151] Another international celebrity Quran reciter facing numerous allegations of predatory behaviour and sexual abuse claims was similarly invited to lead the Ramadan prayers at various *masājid* around Cape Town in April 2021 https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/controversy-over-alleged-visit-by-quranic-reciter-accused-of-abuse article by Shakirah Thebus uploaded 9 April 2021 (accessed 9 April 2021). Despite appeals by GBV activists to have this invitation revoked, the local hosts and organisers have ignored these serious allegations of spiritual abuse and allegations of numerous sexual crimes, and the celebrity reciter was given the masjid platform to lead congregational prayers at several masjids in Cape Town.

[152] Several incidents of sexual abuse in *madāris* by madrasah teachers have been reported in the media, for example a 22 year old madrasah teacher was arrested for the rape of one his students during a madrasah camp https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/family-devastated-after-madressa-teacher-allegedly-raped-boy-at-camp-40567426 article by Genevieve Serra uploaded 14 January 2020 (accessed 19 January 2021). The granddaughter of a prominent Muslim teacher accused him of sexually abusing her since she was 5 years old https://www.capetownetc.com/news/bo-kaap-protest-to-support-woman-allegedly-sexually-abused-by-

Such forms of spiritual abuse rely on the mixed social codes that Muslim children are taught through the concept of *mashrabiyya* (privacy-intimacy) as a way of ensuring silence of their victims. It is in light of such conversations that attention was brought to the ways that the *mimbar* can be an ontologically violent and violating space for the community. The clear cognitive dissonances between the stances adopted by the masjid management in support of Nouman Ali Khan against concerned Muslim community members that voiced objections and their subsequent vacuous denouncing of gender violence all played out publicly - using the *mimbar* space to diffract women's voices.

The incident, for me, raised critical questions about what does *mashrabiyya* actually mean when within the same masjid space, young children are taught that gendered divisions of the prayer space is part of an Islamic ordering of space, where female bodies are placed behind a screen or a barrier as a protection against unwanted male gaze, as a signature of her high honour and modesty and an extension of the *hijāb*. Where the same pedagogical repertoire that teaches young girls to be self-conscious of hair escaping from a headscarf as an act of modesty and protection – also looks away when women do speak out about what makes them feel unprotected and violated. What forms of structural violences are enabled through these gendered spatial ordering practices and how do they contribute towards forms of inequities which then forms part of a complex system of enabling abuse?

These dissonant spatial ordering practices signalled to me just how precariously gender *is* performed within the madrasah space. Within the broader historical contexts of Madrasah C - gender, affluence and authority are seen as inter-related sets of phenomena that are both materially and discursively mapped onto the epistemological ecologies of masjid-madrasah space. The paternalism that premises how spatial ordering rules are enforced and relaxed renders the gendered undertones of the space optically nebulous. *Mashrabiyya* in this context occupies an ambiguous pedagogical space simply because it is a concept that is encountered in conflicting ways within the imaginaries Muslim children.

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grandfather/ article by Lucinda Dordley uploaded 22 October 2020 (accessed 19 January 2021). Another male madrasah teacher has repeatedly faced allegations of sexual abuse of young children in his care over a number of years, yet had continued to hold his teaching position https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/madressa-teacher-accused-of-sexually-assaulting-teen-girl-33064145 article by Monique Duval uploaded 16 September 2019. In these instances, the madrasah teacher used the seclusion of the women's prayer spaces in the masjid to abuse his victims.

5.4. Isikhumbule: This place has always been, the nature, it has survived without the fence[153]

Madrasah B is a "township" madrasah located in Sikhumbule, one of three informal settlements erected in and around a Cape Flats nature conservational site, the Driftsands Nature Reserve. Situated about 30 kilometres from the city of Cape Town, along the N2 national highway, the reserve is considered a geologically critical area of the Cape nature landscape since it consists of vast tracks of calcareous dunes that provides natural wind and sea-sand breakers and helps attenuate flooding. The dunes provide the region with important rainfall catchments areas and these wetlands in turn support a bio-diversity of flora species that have historically sustained vital life ecosystems that included human and more-than-human pastoral movements (Saul *et al*, 2015: 33-35). This indigenous human-animal-plant-land relationality has however over the years been significantly altered due to increased levels of human settlements related to the city's history of racialized spatial planning and urbanised expansions in the area. Sikhumbule also referred to as Driftsands is mostly underdeveloped with limited municipal amenities and the predominantly "black" residents of the township live in both permanent and semi-permanent housing structures, hence termed an "informal" settlement. These socio-historical-ecological factors form an important part of the storying of the spatialities of Madrasah B.

A large stretch of concrete walling marks either side of the N2 highway heading eastwards out of the city towards the Cape Flats; a further length of wall made from reinforced steel and concrete slats wraps and demarcates the "nature reserve" area where Driftsands township is situated. This imposing concrete wall posed an important diffractive feature in my daily commute to and from Madrasah B. To access Driftsands I needed to navigate a busy intersection just off the highway often at peak workday traffic periods. The intersection is the main access road for scores of cars, bicycles, minibus taxi and public bus commuters as well as pedestrians travelling to and from Khayelitsha, Driftsands and Mfuleni townships. The concrete walls along the highway and those surrounding the reserve function as human, animal and vehicle movement diffractions, the wall barrier diverts access and extends traffic flows around its perimeters. At the end of the work day, the intersection was usually congested, noisy with irate drivers, had many stray dogs, horse or mule drawn carts and other livestock crossing and there was always a visible (but often inactive) police presence. Initially when I began

[153] This subtitle is extracted from a statement in Foot's (2013:99) research study on Sikhumbule, the Xhosa name for one of the informal settlements in Driftsands, a predominantly black township that forms part of the Driftsands Nature Reserve and the site where Madrasah B is located. Green Park and Los Angeles are two of the other informal settlements built on or around the reserve area.

commuting to Madrasah B, crossing this busy intersection took a considerable amount of time since I was careful to follow the traffic rules and kept to the correct side of the road. However after a few trips and after noting that not even the traffic cops obeyed these rules of the road, I soon realised that in order to get to my research site timeously, I needed to be more assertive in claiming road space. I mention this, since it is was an important mind-space shift I needed to make in how I encountered this particular township setting.[154] The busy intersection presented a microcosm of the types of symbiotic relationalities between human and more-than-human actors that is central to understanding the ontologies of Muslim childhoods in Driftsands and the forms of pedagogical praxis I observed at Madrasah B.

Several instances raised intuitive provocations that I use here to thread an observational narrative of the spatialities of Madrasah B. The madrasah is located on a corner plot in Driftsands some metres away from the concrete wall structure that separates the nature reserve from the ever-increasing number of temporary informal and semi-formal housings erected around the reserve.[155] The madrasah is one of the few permanent structures in the area connected to an electricity supply grid, it consists of a large prefabricated building that serves as a masjid and madrasah space, a section of which is used as an office and storage space. The madrasah was established in 2009 as a benevolent gesture by a local Muslim benefactor. Although initially there were very few Muslims in the area the number of converts has subsequently increased.

At the time of my study there were 133 children of different ages attending the madrasah daily (including weekends) with one male *shaykh* serving in multiple roles as teacher/ *imām /* director, he was assisted at times by his pre-teen son or another adult male relative. A separate structure adjoins the masjid-madrasah space which serves as a living quarters for the family of the *imām /* director of the madrasah, there is also a communal kitchen and bathroom facilities on the premises. There is a small play area with a wooden jungle gym and other children's play equipment outside. The premises is enclosed by a high wall and a large gate. Although there

[154] Although I was familiar with both the Mfuleni township madrasah (the site initially selected for my research study) and the Driftsands madrasah from previous engagements at both spaces, it was an unfamiliar experience commuting daily by myself and spending long periods at the madrasah. A persistent knowledge that accompanied my daily commute to Madrasah B and my main reference and relationality to the area was one mediated by media reports about the high levels of crime and violence in the area. For example, annual global crime statistics consistently refer to Khayelitsha and surrounding areas as the "murder capital of the world". https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/watch-crime-statistics-delft-khayelitsha-replace-nyanga-as-sas-murder-capital-20200731 article by Azarrah Karrim uploaded 3 July 2020 (accessed 22 January 2021).

[155] The number of make-shift housing in the area would vacillate during the period of my study as new structures would be erected overnight as would many simply disappear either by city officials or be destroyed by inclement weather or were burnt in fires caused by the paraffin lamps and candles used for cooking and lighting.

are no overt architectural features such as a minaret that would signify the space as a masjid-madrasah, there is a large sculptural feature in the front yard with a crescent moon and star symbol as well as the name of the masjid's benefactor. The outside wall has a large inscription that states "Islam is a way of life" which is visible from the highway. I also noted that several areas of the madrasah building had signage of logos of different Muslim charitable organisations or names of donors that have contributed to the masjid-madrasah.

The times that I spent at the madrasah varied since the classes were often rotational as groups of children would arrive and leave at different times. The masjid-madrasah was open every day of the week, and different age groups that ranged from toddlers to high school learners would often be present in the same class. The madrasah curriculum includes Quran reading, *ḥifẓ* and *dua* (memorisation and invocations), *aqidah* (doctrine), *akhlaq* (moral training), *fiqh* (practical) and history lessons. As one of the few places with electricity and running water on the premises, the madrasah also serves as an after-school care facility for young children in the area and a homework and study space for older children. There are also weekend madrasah classes for adult females.

The madrasah provides a daily feeding program for the children and elderly members of the settlement, a phenomenon that was not observed at any of the other three *madāris*. On the first day I arrived at the site I observed as rows of children (not all of whom are Muslim and therefore did not all attend the madrasah classes) were served a meal. At the time there was a global outbreak of Listeriosis (a food borne disease) that in SA was found to be spread by mass-produced processed meats such as polony. My awareness of this issue was amplified by the ongoing discussions in the media at the time, therefore I immediately noticed with concern that the madrasah children were joyfully eating sandwiches made of penny polony.[156] At one point during my observational study, a donor had a water-well and a water storage unit installed on the premises, this was in response to the ongoing water shortage crisis in Cape Town and the strict water restrictions imposed by the city in 2018.[157]

[156] Penny polony is a type of processed meat made from various cheaper cuts of meat products and it includes artificial fillers and other animal off-cuts to bulk up the substance and taste of the product. https://www.womenshealthsa.co.za/food-and-nutrition/polony/ article by Cally Silberbauer uploaded 6 March 2018 (accessed 24 January 2020). Mass producers of processed meats that cater to lower income households often provide little nutritional value in their products and have been found to be one of the major sites for the spread of diseases that result from food contamination https://www.thedailyvox.co.za/how-polony-is-made-rumana-akoob/ article by Rumana Akoob uploaded 12 March 2018 (accessed 24 January 2020).

[157] The city of Cape Town had experienced 3 consecutive years of below average precipitation during the period 2015-2017 and in 2018 responding to what has been described as the worst drought since 1904 the city declared March 2018 to be "Day Zero" a timeline for when the city's water reserves would be expended. Several measures

Annually, as part of the *mawlid* celebration a local benefactor together with members of the broader Cape Town Muslim community hosts a program at the masjid-madrasa that includes a procession through the streets of Driftsands, sharing a meal with the community as well as holding a special *dhikr* gathering where all girls of the madrasah are dressed up in long white dresses and their hair draped in green headscarves. These observations, in particular, stood out as it opened a window for thinking about how issues of community, conversion, *da'wah* (propagation), food security, climate change, nature conservation and charity are entangled with the notion of madrasah in SA, and how such issues are diffracted by a politics of race and gender within Islam more broadly. Paying closer attention to these entanglements, and using walls and roads as a provocation prompt to think with, I consider some of the ways that gender patterns emerge within this particular township madrasah context.

In storying the spatialities of Madrasah B, I am mindful of, and also concur with, Sitoto's (2018: 164) argument that the reading of black South African Muslims through the parochial lenses of conversion not only limits a full accounting of Black African Muslim presences in SA but also shapes how black Muslim self-understandings and experiences gets uncritically scripted through this tapered historical retelling. Such limiting lenses, he suggests, participate in the othering of black Muslims and enacts a type of racial coding to South African Islam. This is not to deny the fact that conversion has been one of the key channels through which many black Muslims in SA have historically emerged and therefore much of the extant literature on black African Muslims in South Africa (Tayob: 1995; Dangor: 1997; Lee: 2001; Vahed: 2014; Nkuna: 2016; Vawda: 2017; Gabauer: 2019) reflects this historical focus. Rather than essentializing this historical experience, the lack of alternate readings about black South African Muslims merely highlights the aporia that exists for telling a different set of stories about black Muslims in SA beyond a narrative of conversion. Therefore in shifting focus from black Muslim conversions towards *da'wah*– I consider Madrasah B as a material-discursive-affective mapping of Islamic praxis in SA where black township experiences convey an important storying of Muslim childhood spatialities. The geographical and ecological landscapes of Madrasah B offers an enriching lens for thinking about *madāris* and differing ways the gendered worlds of Islam are inhabited.

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were introduced in that period to reduce and preserve water usage including imposing restrictions and increasing water taxes. Although poorer and informal areas such as Driftsands have minimal access to water they are often the worst affected https://www.worldweatherattribution.org/the-role-of-climate-change-in-the-2015-2017-drought-in-the-western-cape-of-south-africa/ report by World Weather Attribution uploaded 13 July 2018 (accessed 22 January 2021).

The ecological and spatial morphology of Driftsands exposes how the concept of nature, and nature conservation in particular is racialized and politicised, as are the binaries through which the concepts of formal and informal human settlements are constructed. Prior to European settlements in the Cape, indigenous pastoral communities used the area for grazing livestock and for their own food and medicinal needs, the terrestrial life between human, animal, marine and plant worlds co-existed in a mutual relationality (Daraghma;2009; Foot:2013; Saaghus:2016). The impact of colonial settlers has however had far reaching ecological consequences for the area in terms of how natural resources such as water, wild game, wood, aquatic animals, land and so forth were arrogated. Additionally, European settlers introduced alien plant species in a bid to tame the area and re-create the landscape to suit their colonialist aspirations (Saul *et al*, 2015:22).

During the years of apartheid racialized spatial planning, this Cape Flats wetlands area was identified as a site for relocating the city's black population. According to the 1972 Deed Grant 224, almost 737 thousand hectares of land in this geologically sensitive area was claimed by the apartheid government. Besides the relocation of the city's black migrant population to these urban peripheries, the construction of the main airport in 1954 and its attendant air pollution and the creation of industrial zones nearby, the area was further disturbed by the construction of the N2 national highway. Twidle (2017:79) discusses the social geography of air and long term impacts of air pollution that arise from infrastructure construction such as the N2 highway (which is also the longest and busiest highway in South Africa), he notes how the industrial "brown haze" that engulfs Cape Flats neighbourhoods contributes to the prevalence of respiratory illnesses such as asthma in these areas along the N2. The wetlands area had mostly been left neglected during apartheid years, however post-apartheid the Western Cape Nature Board was mandated to look after the area under the Protected Areas Act 2003 (Saul *et al*, 2015:22; Saaghus, 2016: 61). As part of that mandate to protect and preserve the ecology of the area, the Driftsands Nature Reserve was established by erecting the concrete walling around the reserve boundaries. The concrete wall as a physical and ideological barrier intended to separate/protect human from nature and/or nature from humans is a material-discursive construct that is complexly located.

Colonial and apartheid powers have historically constructed a "protectionist" rhetoric to justify white ownership claims to land and wildlife whilst alienating the black population from nature

(Daraghma, 2009:12-13; Saaghus, 2016: 93)[158] With no legal claims to land ownership, township overcrowding, increased labour migratory patterns, food insecurity, rising economic inequalities in black townships on the Cape Flats, the number of informal settlements around the conservation site has since 1994 increased and the boundary wall has become a locus of much contention. Constant threats of eviction by the city, the precarity of temporary housing structures built using scrap metals, high levels of crime and violence in the area coupled with lack of amenities and basic services - the concrete wall for the community of Driftsands is a material and symbolic barrier that simultaneously protects the fragility of reserve's ecosystems on the one hand, but also increases the environmental vulnerabilities of its human inhabitants on the other hand. Co-constitutive barriers include bureaucratic red-tape between residents' concerns and those in charge with managing the area.[159] The semantics of formal-informal settlements creates further barriers to accessing municipal resources such as connections to electricity supply grids and mobile communication networks, sanitary access like flushing toilets, sewerage and refuse disposal, and clean running water supply. Additional barriers are constantly erected between different political factions and tribal loyalties and/or religious/ideological allegiances, including xenophobic barriers between local residents and African migrants.

[158] Two related incidents help illustrate some of the explicit and implicit ways nature discourses are racialized. 23 year old Ugandan climate-justice activist, Vanessa Nakate, was the only black activist among five other European white girls that held a news conference at 2020 World Economic Forum in Davos. Media coverage of the event however digitally cropped Nakate out of a group photo of the activists. Responding to this erasure on social media, Nakate highlighted how European child climate activists like Greta Thunberg gain international notoriety for their climate stances, whilst those speaking from Africa and the global South, who are most affected by the effects of climate injustice are erased from the public visibility or their relationalities to, and affinities with nature get filtered through white gazes. Article by Ikran Dahir uploaded 24 January 2020 (accessed 25 January 2020). https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/ikrd/vanessa-nakate-greta-thunberg-davos Another example of the racializing undertones of nature discourses is a paper published in the South African Journal of Science by Professor Nicoli Nattras that claimed *black students do not choose to study biological sciences largely due to the lack of interest for nature conservation, and are driven by socio-economic status, materialistic values, anti-colonialism, and not believing in evolution.* These speculative findings have understandably drawn much scholarly and public criticism for the racist equivalencies it makes about black students relationalities to, and interests in nature. The tone-deaf and racializing premises of the study have since been reviewed but not retracted. Article by Palesa Natasha Mothapo *et al* uploaded 8 June 2020 https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-poor-research-practices-should-discouraged-does-career-mothapo/ (accessed 12 June 2020).

[159] Besides the Cape Nature Board, Driftsands and surrounding townships need to deal with multiple sites of governance and management such Department of Human Settlements, Department of Urbanisation, Informal Settlement Management Office, Mayoral executive office, various elected ward councillors as well as tribal and religious leadership (Saaghun, 2016:52). Many of the residents of Driftsands are from neighbouring areas of Crossroads, Khayelitsha, Langa and Delft that have relocated because of evictions, overcrowding or because of internal community conflicts. So communication channels and public confidence in officials are hampered further by these barriers.

Daraghma (2009:12) describes the Driftsands community as living in spaces and states of temporality, emergency and hopelessness. Locating black Muslim visibility within these spaces and states of temporality, emergency and hopelessness, the masjid-madrasah activities serve an important socialising function in this informal township setting. I noted the importance placed on maintaining a particular public aesthetic of Islam, one that is visibilised and responsive to the needs of the broader community, not just the Muslims in the area. For example, similar to the message "Islam is a way of life" inscribed boldly on the outer walls of Madrasah B, I also captured an image (figure 11 below) of the outer walls of the nearby Mfuleni township madrasah that initially formed part of my observational study.

(*Fig 11)*

In my discussions with the directors of both *madāris* it was evident that they regarded their roles as *du'āt* (callers to the faith) as more central than being educators.[160]At both spaces, there was a simplicity and sincerity in the understanding and practice of Islam as submission, the madrasah lessons I observed reflected that sentiment as well. The tone and tempo at each visit was always joyful and cheerful. The children inhabited the madrasah space with a distinct sense

[160] Discussion with the director of Madrasah B on 9 May 2018. Telephonic discussion with the director of Mfuleni township madrasah 28January 2018. The image (figure 11) was captured on my mobile phone during a site visit to the Mfuleni madrasah on 28 January 2018. At the time the madrasah premises was closed.

of comfort and familiarity. They would enter and leave the premises at different times, some would play outside on the equipment, some would join in the madrasah classes and some would come for meals and leave. The *imām* had a nurturing grace in his interactions with the children and elderly that were usually present, his demeanour was consistently friendly and kind with both the madrasah children as well as the number of benefactors that visited the madrasah often during the time I spent there[161].

The madrasah's daily feeding scheme is another important way that Islam as community praxis forms part of its pedagogical repertoires. Hunger as a barrier affects childhoods in multiple ways. Not only does food insecurity impact upon children's health and growth, but children from impoverished communities like Driftsands often lag behind in school performance and their learning processes hampered. The Department of Basic Education has implemented a National School Feeding Scheme in addition to the Child Support grant to aggressively combat these childhood structural barriers. However, as Munje and Jita's (2019:27) study has revealed, the school feeding scheme in Cape Town schools is one that is encumbered by a host of delivery and implementation problems. Among them, insufficient funding, improper planning, disinterested and/or unqualified frontline workers, politicization of food access and corruption. A number of local NGOs as well as religious organisations have contributed much to cushion the impact of child hunger on the Cape Flats, where the barriers between formal and informal childhood spaces have dire consequences. In this context, one of the core ethical teachings of Islam and its charitable spirit finds visible expression through the serving of daily meals at Madrasah B. Kagee (2017: 38-40) points out, that feeding the poor (*sadaqah*), and distribution of personal wealth (*zakat*) is not only a tenet of the Islamic faith, but forms part of broader moral societal vision through which Islamic justice is actualised. Therefore in its practical implementation, Muslim organised feeding schemes are typically coupled with establishing *madāris* and related acts of goodwill for children in impoverished communities.

In addition to the daily meals prepared for the madrasah children and elderly members of the community, Madrasah B distributes food hampers to households in the area for the month of Ramadan and hosts special communal meals for the *ʻĪd* day celebrations and the annual *mawlid* commemoration. The madrasah children also participate in occasional field trips such as visits

[161] I noted that the *imām* always spoke in English in my presence, I (incorrectly and also presumptuously) thought that it was for my benefit, since most of the children spoke in Xhosa. He however clarified and indicated that he was in fact not a South African and therefore did not speak Xhosa himself, so he always engaged the childen in English as a common language.

to the aquarium or the *karamat* (shrines) of Muslim forebears. These events are facilitated mainly through anonymous donations, at times sponsors do participate in the distribution of foodstuffs since these occasions are coupled with public talks or *dhikr* gatherings. For example, the annual *mawlid* programme is held as a street procession, the *salawāt* (invocations of blessings) are rendered over loudspeakers, all the girls of the madrasah dress up in white dresses and green headscarves, the masjid-madrasah is decorated with flowers and the proceedings conclude with a shared meal with the whole community. I also attended the madrasah's annual *jalsah* (graduation) programme in 2019, a fundraising dinner that was held in a hall in the southern suburbs where the madrasah children performed various sketches, recited poetry and sang *qasidahs* (praise songs). At both these occasions, the optics of beauty created by the children's colourful dress, their joyful sounds of prayer and praise and communal spirit of smiling countenances was especially commanding since it contrasted so starkly with the perceptual optics of destitution and gloom I had associated with certain media depictions of a township environment. The *imām* indicated to me that the madrasah does not have a permanent benefactor or a fixed source of funds, availability of resources are therefore flexible and also uncertain. He however noted that this uncertainty was not a concern for him since he held faith that abundance or *rizq* (livelihood) was not determined by the availability or lack of donor funds, he stated "even when there is very little there is always enough *barakah* (blessings)".[162] His sentiments herein reflect an understanding of or trust in an (informal and unregulated in a South African context) economic system, where wealth or resources is not entirely possessed individually but proportionately shared with others. Within an Islamic legal framework this is facilitated through the *zakat* system - an obligatory wealth tax imposed on the better resourced to be distributed to the socio-economically vulnerable as well through voluntary charitable acts of compassion and kindness. Ideationally, this wealth distributive system "tightens the weave of the social fabric by repairing any fissures" (Abraham, 2020:122). What the *imām* refers to as *rizq* is conceptually correlated with the notion of a sympoietic system, a co-worlding or kinship that recognises human flourishing as co-emerging from collective agentive goodwill.

Zencirci (2020:3) notes that Muslim charitable acts are always open to interpretation, since benevolence is a dynamic site where "ideas about religion, economy, and society are not merely reflected but also actively constituted, negotiated, and produced". He further notes the ways that "charity as a performative site" creates opportunities for Islam to be marketed, used for

[162] Informal conversation with the *imām* on 3 March 2018.

scoring salvation points, or a means to dispense moral responsibilities, or even as an exchange for political and/or ideological favour. Faith-based giving, feeding and other acts of kindness occupies a compounded space in the imaginaries and practices of Muslims. Objectifying and reifying poverty is often premised on donor saviour complex, where recipient's agencies are erased either by imageries of stricken, dirty or meek looking faces of black childhoods which are used to motivate a humanitarian response. Alternatively, black childhood agency is filtered through placating paternalistic images of black and/or poor children's smiling and grateful faces, where absent donors are implicitly mapped as participating in the joyful countenance of poor Muslim childhoods. Charitable tropes, much like conversion when filtered through an outsider/observer gaze runs the risk of bracketing black South African Muslim childhoods to that limited and limiting perspective. Notwithstanding the potentiality of such performative exchanges in many South African black townships, there are also many spaces that imbibe and reflect an ethos of generosity, care and solidarity.[163] From my observations, it appeared that Madrasah B provided a safe and nurturing space for the broader community not just the Muslim children that attended the madrasah. A functioning that can be attributed to the leadership, gravitas and independence of the *imām* despite and not because of the charitable support the space receives from the broader Muslim community.

A visualisation of black Muslim childhoods onto township roads that I found to be particularly salient and reflective of the underlying *da'wah* ethic of Madrasah B are reflected in two images below. The first image (figure 12)[164] captures the *mawlid* commemoration and the street procession led by the *imām* and members of the broader Muslim community and the locals in the area. The second image (figure 13)[165] captures the *imām* joining the Driftsands community in a street protest in support the LGBQTI+ community after one of its residents was brutally murdered in a homophobic crime.

[163] The South African Muslim Directory for example lists over 217 Muslim charitable and social welfare organisations in South Africa http://www.samd.co.za/tableorgs.php (accessed 9 October 2020) which is proportionately significant to the documented percentage of Muslims in the country. Besides contributing to local causes these organisations support many humanitarian causes globally.

[164] Image captured on 11 March 2018 during the Mass Mawlid SA – Driftsands program (photo used with permission from Mawlid SA).

[165] Image posted on Mamba Online website https://www.mambaonline.com/2016/12/12/driftsands-lgbti-community-take-back-streets-honour-vovo/ article by Roberto Igual uploaded on 12 December 2016 (accessed 17 March 2018). On 3 December 2016, Driftsands resident 22 year old lesbian Noluvo Swelindawo was accosted in her home by 11 men who dragged her from her bed and brutally murdered and left her body under the footbridge of the N2 highway. In protest against this heinous homophobic crime the community held a march through the streets of Driftsands carrying protest banners that stated "Her name was Noluvo" and "Homophobia is UnAfrican".

(Fig 12)

(Fig 13)

I found the image (figure 13) of the *imām* participating in a queer-rights protest especially edifying considering the deeply polarising opinions Muslims generally hold about issues of sexual diversity and prevalent forms of homophobia that exists within the Muslim community. Shaikh and Osman (2017: 44-45) for example note the broad spectrum of Muslim approaches to sexual diversity that includes far right opinions that reflect virulent forms of queerphobia to positions of acceptance and embracing of queer Muslim identities, with a range of ambivalent stances between these two opposite poles. For the most part, Muslims in SA tend to be publicly non-committal on issues of homophobic violence given these internal polarising debates.

I therefore asked the *imām* about his participation at the street protest. He indicated that he did not consider his participation as expressing a theological position on homosexuality, rather as taking a firm stance against violence and brutality. He considered his presence and voice an important acknowledgement of community solidarity.[166] Some of the placards at the protest march stated “Homophobia is UnAfrican”, which locates the community’s sentiments as part of a broader decolonial composition resisting imposed forms of identity categorisations and colonial-era gender and sexual codes. The violent intolerant impulses that instigates homophobia or even Islamophobia stems from an inherited legacy of racialized heteronormative and patriarchal assumptions that view difference as deviance. Muslims visibility in black townships therefore face as much risk as do members of the LGBQTI+ community for been viewed as different or deviant or un-African even. By publicly marking Muslim presence at both the protest march and the *mawlid* street procession, the *imām* is filtering a theological ethic as a critical voice of community solidarity and a visible mapping of African Muslims and Islamic praxis onto the landscape and imaginaries of the broader community. The two images display how social complexities and faith commitments can be accommodated without theological contradiction.

These images of the walls and roads of Madrasah B help map some of the relational ontologies of Muslim childhoods in township spaces. In this sense, roads and walls instantiate both patterns of vulnerability (such as the precarity of temporary housing structures and barriers to accessing basic services) as well as instances of security and safety (such as community solidarity as well as nurturing faith spaces). Underlying these relationalities are material-discursive constructions of nature that are both racialized and gendered in specific ways. In considering how such constructions are co-constituted within the madrasah space, below I recount some observances of gendered praxis as it relates to pedagogies of Islamic ritual practice.

Gendering *Tahārah*: ritual purity and childhood relationalities to water and sanitation

My observational study occurred in 2018, in that year the Western Cape was undergoing a critical water shortage crisis, an impending “Day Zero” of depleted water reserves was predicted for the province and there were strict water restrictions in place during that period. The water crisis and water-saving strategies were therefore foremost topics occupying public

[166] Informal conversation with the *imām* on 24 April 2018.

discourse at the time. The crisis brought into sharper focus the perils of climate change, the inequalities of anthropocentric affects and environmental injustices caused by global extractive economies. Muslim responses to the water crisis were marked in a number of ways, for example mass inter-faith prayers for rain were held (Haron, 2017: 359-360), the *mimbar* space was used to exhort congregants to be more mindful consumers of water (Fataar, 2019: 69-73), *masjid* spaces adjusted their water usage practices, some called for alternative water-wise ways to performing the purification rituals required for prayers[167] and many *madāris* incorporated water preservation as part of their lessons.

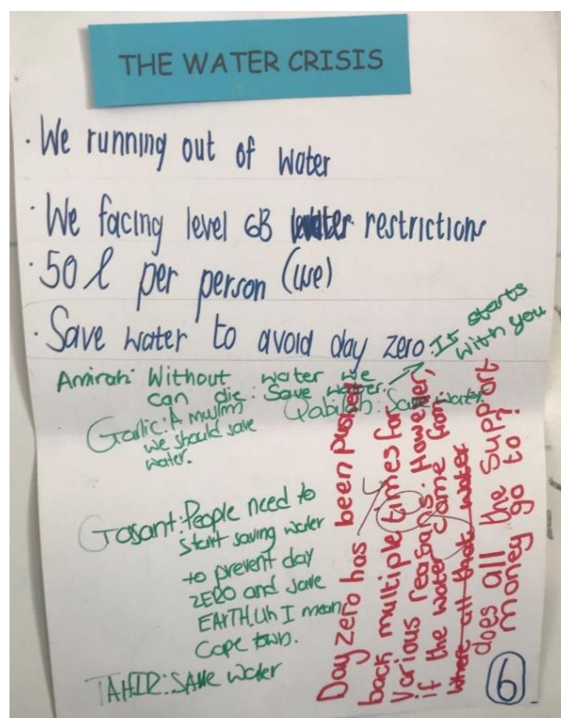
The concept of *ṭahārah* (purification) is one of the main subjects taught in all *madāris* since it is a key precept for the practice and performance of Islamic rituals. The composite body of Islamic juristic engagements on various aspects related to the concept of *ṭahārah* is vast, complex and indicative of centrality of water to the practice of Islam. For example, Muslims are required to wash and purify their bodies, clothing and living spaces after using the toilet, after sexual intercourse, before performing the ritual prayers and reciting the Quran, following childbirth, at the completion of menstrual cycles and at the time of death, bodies are washed before burial. At each of the three other *madāris* I noted that the topic of water-saving was addressed in various ways, usually in relation to lessons dealing with ritual purity that invariably require the use of water. The teaching-learning about the concept of *ṭahārah* and the reinforcing of the practice of saving water as part of those lessons were clearly based on normative assumptions of madrasah children's relationalities to water. An assumption of normativity that I questioned only because it was something highlighted by the absence of similar discussions about water saving at Madrasah B. Although the concept of *ṭahārah* featured prominently in the lessons I observed at Madrasah B, it was evident that such were based on a very different set of assumptions regarding children's access to water than the other three madrasah spaces.

I noted that every lesson at Madrasah B consisted of detailed discussions on the importance of *istinjah* (washing the private parts after using the toilet). In follow on discussions with the *imām* he explained the reasons for this focus. He noted that for most of the township children besides having no access to toilets, many use communal pit latrines in a community where access to

[167] Masjids were encouraged to use spray bottles instead of taps for ritual ablution or apply the juristic concession of *tayammum* (dry water-less cleanse) https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/opinion/everydropcounts-muslims-apply-principle-of-ease-during-hardship-13305739 article by Dr A Rashid Omar entitled *#EveryDropCounts: Muslims apply 'principle of ease' during hardship,* uploaded 15 February 2018 (accessed 24 January 2021).

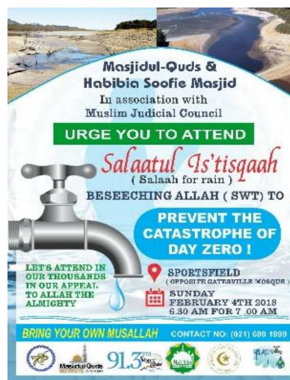
water is a scarce commodity. The idea that Muslims use water to wash after using the toilet is often regarded by others as wasteful. Also the sight of Muslim children entering communal toilets with a water bottle often invites taunts from others that consider such behaviour as foreign, or un-African. He also pointed out that for many of the young black girls and boys at the madrasah, the idea that menstruation and post-coital fluids are unclean, or ritually impure that requires a full body bath or *ghusl* - is a set of behaviours that requires much spatial negotiation. Most of the girls or women living an informal settlements have never ever had access to a shower or privacy for a full body bath, since cleansing practices often involve using small buckets of water, usually when others are asleep. The notion of personal space and privacy is very different for those living in a one room shack shared with multiple people, and where scarce sources of communal water supplies needs to be shared.

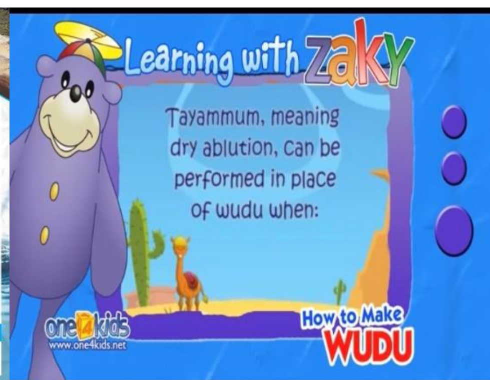
Children inheriting ecologically damaged worlds face multiple yet differing forms of precarity and water vulnerabilities, these relational ontologies require what Nxumalo and Villanueva (2019:41-42) refer to as a less human-centric, and more relational "ways of noticing" human inequalities in specific places and spaces. The differences of Muslim children's relationalities to water and access to sanitation and privacy were especially pronounced when comparing the very particular ways that the pedagogies of *ṭahārah* were diffracted at the four *madāris*. For example, the image below (figure 14) maps onto the "graffiti wall" space at Madrasah A some indications of children's relationships to water and their encounters with the water-crisis.



(Fig 14)

It is instructive to note from the responses above how children's understandings of the water crisis are diffracted through public discourses *about* the crisis, such as referencing specific details about the level of water restrictions or daily litre allowances for water usage, and signalling an awareness that the "Day Zero" prediction has specific political and economic impacts. A different set of Muslim children's water-crisis encounters (see figures 15, 16 and 17 below)[168] were mapped through community events and children's teaching-learning resources about alternative forms of practicing *ṭahārah* during periods of water scarcity. For example, Madrasah C in conjunction with several other *masājid*, *madāris* and local Muslim media held a mass prayer for rain, drawing on the spiritual resources of the community as a collective response to the crisis.





(Fig 15) *(Fig16)* *(Fig17)*

In noticing the pedagogical language of Madrasah B it was evident that the topic of *ṭahārah* was nuancedly and specifically responding to the children's relationalities to water in ways that were very different to the children at other three madrasah spaces. For example, the topic of the impending "Day Zero" or water restrictions were not mentioned at all, this suggested that because water scarcity was already a spatio-temporal reality, the notion of a *looming* crisis was not something to prepare for or be reminded of and learned about. At one point during my stint at the madrasah, a donor had sponsored a water-well to be drilled on site, the children I noted were hugely excited for the presence of the earth-drilling machinery rather than how a water-well might differently affect their lives. The madrasah children's spatial realities collapsed several nature-culture, public-private and discursive-material binaries, so the notion of

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[168] Madrasah poster for *salat al-istisqah* (congregational prayer for rain), children's animated video demonstration for waterless ways of performing ritual purity https://muslimahlifestyle.com/essential-muslim-tips-for-the-cape-town-water-crisis/ uploaded 16 February 2018 (accessed 22 November 2020); front cover Muslim Views, 18 February 2018 issue.

practicing *ṭahārah* required a very different pedagogical approach than teaching about temporary water-saving alternatives.

Lack of access to water, sanitation services and privacy are ontological and affective childhood encounters that are also gendered in particular ways. For example, Scorgie *et al* (2015) notes how water precarity affects how young girls in townships can practice menstrual health hygiene. Girls' menstruation experiences are shaped by materials available to them in terms of absorbing menstrual blood and also means of disposing of soiled materials, these are also practices that hold very specific forms of cultural taboos. In township settings, menstruating girls and women often need to resort to using various forms of non-biodegradable materials, the lack of sanitation services and means that disposal of these materials are often discarded in ways that cause block drains which further compromises already scarce water supplies. The long term environmental impact for such communities are not only related to temporary water-saving tactics applied by some, it is intimately entangled with broader socio-economic and political processes that render places like Driftsands especially vulnerable. Feminist political ecologists (Sultana, 2018: 20) have noted how climate-change and related water-scarcity affects are gendered which are further exasperated by socio-economic conditions of multiple childhood vulnerabilities. Others (Slater *et al*, 2018:12) have pointed the intersecting ways that children's toilet etiquettes are gendered, girls need to navigate privacy concerns about their urination and defaecation habits in ways that boys don't, since girls often assume a sense of bodily shame and defilement in ways that are very different from boys. Besides the physical hazards that pit latrines pose for young children, township communal toilets render children more vulnerable to sexual violence and abuse. Thus teaching Muslim children about Islamic practices of ritual purity in the case of Madrasah B has to take into account what notions of purity, purification and privacy means when one's lived experiences are located in contexts of precarity, scarcity and absence.

Paying attention to ways that Islamic texts mediate and create asymmetrical pedagogical relationships within the madrasah space, where authority is vested in the text, I noted that the children in Madrasah B did not utilise any textbooks with the exception of Quranic scripts or Arabic alphabetic learning texts. Most of the lessons were conveyed orally, at times the *imām* used a whiteboard to write the names of key Islamic historical figures he was discussing. For the most part, I noted, the children arrived at madrasah with no bags and did not use any reading-writing implements during their lessons, at times however they would simulate writing

by drawing letters of the Arabic alphabet in the air using their fingers. Similar to Madrasah A and D where textbooks were also not used, and unlike Madrasah C where all lessons and activities were centred on prescribed textbooks and accompanying workbooks, the lack or presence of texts is one indication of how religious authority is mediated in the madrasah space. However, unlike Madrasah A and D where the underlying ethos of rationality premises why textbooks do not feature as part of the madrasah syllabus but instead relies on intra-actively learning through praxis (such as field-trips and graffiti wall discussions), the absence of textbooks in Madrasah B may be attributed to different set of reasons. One of the most salient of these, in my assessment, is the fact that most madrasah learning texts produced or that are widely used and readily available in SA, cater to a specific demographic as a normative Muslim child learner. These texts are usually based on particular class assumptions about household and familial arrangements where Islamic practices such as *halal* (permissible) foodstuffs, access to clean water, privacy and so forth are already present. A township child will find little of her/his lived realities represented except as a recipient of other's charitable goodwill, or *da'wa* efforts. South African *ulama* bodies generally take on a paternalistic guardianship role in relation to black township communities, they often have separate departments that regard township *madāris* and Muslim township children as part of their own *da'wa,* charity and educational campaigns.[169] Whist this relationship responds to historical legacies of racial socio-economic inequalities and therefore attends to this deficit as a gesture of collective goodwill. This positioning however also renders township Muslim communities in an asymmetrical and subsuming relationship with the dominant class and culture of the broader Muslim leadership bodies and Islamic organisations who are responsible for developing madrasah curricula and learning texts.

Zaid Langa[170] of the Gauteng Muslim Shura Council points out why an "ikasi" (black township) madrasah requires more than "content dissemination" – he suggests that Muslim

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[169] One of the main benefactors of Madrasah B is the Naqshbandi Sufi Order, during a visit by in 2000 by the Naqshbandi world leader *Mawlana Shaykh* Nazim al-Haqqani (d.2014) to Cape Town the *shaykh* is noted to have asked "*I am in Africa. Where are the African Muslims?* Following this visit the organisation undertook the building of several masājid in various African townships in southern Africa as part of its *da'wa* initiatives https://www.naqshbandi.org.za/dawah/ (accessed 24 September 2020).

[170]Zaid Thulani Langa is also the President of the Soweto Muslim Shura Council that was established in 2009 as an organisational body for township Muslim communities https://sidizaid.wordpress.com/2018/03/06/township-madrassahs-need-a-paradigm-shift/#comments (accessed 27 December 2020). Similar arguments have been raised at the "South African Black Muslim Conference" held in Johannesburg 19-21 April 2019, many participants noted that black Muslims are not treated as equals by Indian Muslims. Article by Mustapha B Mheta, uploaded 30 April 2019. https://mediareviewnet.com/2019/04/the-coming-of-age-of-the-black-muslims-of-south-africa-the-way-forward/ (accessed 25 December 2020).

township childhoods present a unique phenomenon of children who come from mainly Christian homes, yet their parents willingly send their children to madrasah to learn about Islam. Notwithstanding the many positive oeuvres *ulama* bodies and other Muslim charitable and *da'wa* organisations have made towards the establishment of *madāris* in townships, he notes that their pedagogical methods and tools are not necessarily responsive to these unique township circumstances. These remarks correlates to the pedagogical strategies I observed at Madrasah B where the *imām* filtered much of the lessons, particularly those relating to *ṭahārah* in ways that spoke directly to and of the children's lived spatial realities.

Several other pedagogical practices stood out for me at Madrasah B that differed from my encounters at the other two masjid-madrasah spaces (Madrasah C and D). For example, at the time for prayers (I was present at the madrasah at different prayers times not just the late afternoon prayer) because the space is one large room there are no separate sections for males and females, so there was no fuss made about the spaces girls and boys occupied. The prayer rows would include all who were present at the time, including toddlers, girls without any head-coverings even those not praying but simply joining in the congregation. In my conversations with the children, I asked what aspects of being Muslim they valued the most or found most meaningful (a question I asked children at each of the four *madāris*). A few of the older girls indicated to me that they especially loved wearing the *hijāb* – they considered the bright colours and different style options as making them feel and look "beautiful". Some of the younger boys noted to me that other children sometimes made fun of them wearing the *thawb* (long robe) saying they looked like "girls" in dresses. Notably, there seem to be no expectation that children dress in any particular way since some girls had headscarves whilst other did not, few boys wore *thawbs* and a skullcap whilst other had shorts and t-shirts. A group of teenage boys who walked daily from neighbouring Khayelitsha to attend the madrasa was introduced to me by the *imām.* He was especially proud of the boys since they had only recently embraced Islam yet in the short period they had managed to memorise large portions of the Qur'an. Despite being robbed several times and one of them also being stabbed (this occurred whilst walking to madrasah on the footbridge at the intersection that connects Khayelitsha to Driftsands) the boys were nonetheless committed to attending madrasah every day.

Ibrahim-Lizzio (2015:27-31) raises salient points about the types of bodily nuances and notions of social entitlements that underpin Islamic conceptions of space, dressing comportments, privacy and gender. She notes how historical socio-economic contexts of slavery informed

Muslim attitudes about women's dress and seclusion practices. The early generation of Muslim scholars and exegetes provided guidelines for Muslim women's adornments in ways that reinforced social stratifications between free and enslaved. Veiling in this early period was one way social hierarchies, and female social entitlements were marked, seclusion and veiling were thus seen as a practice of the elite. After the abolishment of slavery, Muslim scholars continued to grapple with the gendered nuances of institutionalised slavery. The idea of women's seclusion away from public and veiling practices shifted in legal discourses to one of protection, family honour and associated with religious piety. Islamic scholars also interpret Quranic references to the *hijāb* and *jilbāb* (outer garment) as a means of averting *ta'arruḍ* (sexual harassment) and protecting against persecution (ibid: 34). There are range of positions that Muslim women and men adopt in how seclusion, bodily covering and adornments, notions of privacy as prescriptive or as desired, honour and moral piety are understood, as there are differences in the types of social entitlements and positionings being claimed in relation to these bodily choices. My observations of the ways that children at Madrasah B adopt and encounter these positions suggest that notions of Islamic bodily comportments, adornments, dress and gendered spatial codes were mostly flexible and variably adapted.

The ontological relationalities of Muslim childhoods in informal settlements raised several provocations that I was simply inattentive to at the other three madrasah spaces. It highlighted for me the multiple ways that Islam discourses about *madāris* and *tarbiyyah* assume that Muslim childhoods have access to basic resources, and therefore address pedagogies in ways where access to sanitation and privacy is unproblematic. I was especially alerted to ways that black Muslims in South African informal settlements are often excluded from a range of conversations about Islamic gender issues. I reflected on how much of my own engagements focused on issues that mirrored my own privileged position of concerns even in instances when I presumed myself to be aware and empathetic of how poverty and impoverishment affects Muslim women's experiences.

In the next concluding chapter of this thesis I consider the overall emergences from my each of the four madrasah spaces and offer a set of broader reflections about the spatialities and gendered pedagogies of Muslim childhoods.

Chapter Six

Conclusion: Diffracting Chains of Barakah –
Reviewing and Remapping South African Muslim Childhoods
Spatial Stories

It is astonishingly easy to lose the picture while focusing on a single pixel[171]

(Fig 18)

By way of concluding my diffractive analysis on Muslim childhoods, gender and the madrasah space, I return to the 1994 "Chain of Barakah" procession introduced at the start of this thesis. The image above (figure 18) depicts the public enactment of Muslim children carrying a Quran from madrasah to madrasah, bearing flags of a 300 year old historical footprint of Islam in SA, dressed in white and suffused with Muslim childhoods futurity hopes circa the birth of SA's democracy. The image also captures a viscerally commanding ontological moment about Muslim childhoods and *madāris* as a politically charged, religiously salient, historically burdened, spatially mapped social phenomenon. Multiple sets of agencies or material-discursive participants are implicated in the emergence of this moment, including its re-presentation in a pixelated digital format here. It is this entanglement of the historical, geographical and affective, as well as the complicity of past-present, visible-invisible, human-matter and material-discursive agencies in co-creating childhood ontological worlds that have

[171] Extract from Hacking (1999:36). Image (figure 18) of madrasah children carrying a copy of the Quran through the streets of Cape Town as part of the 300 years of Islam in South Africa commemoration in 1994 by photo-journalist Shafiq Morton http://surfingbehindthewall.blogspot.com/2014/04/

informed my own lines of inquiry or "ways of noticing" and guided my diffractive reading of the four madrasah spaces selected for this study.

In offering my concluding remarks, I re-state a key point made in chapter two of this thesis regarding the aims and also the limitations of any diffractive engagement. A diffractive analysis does not claim to objectively represent a reality, rather it reflects an optical scale of relationality between the researcher and research subjects including the agentive acts of observing, documenting, analysing and presenting data. All research acts are part of co-creating the optics of a social phenomenon. That is, the research field is not data (a reality that exists outside of measurement) awaiting to be observed, collated and analysed as if uninterrupted - the processes employed in co-generating data and the tools applied in analysing the data and the conclusions determined, are not separate from the social phenomena being analysed. A more accurate rendering of a diffractive research inquiry process acknowledges that the act of observing is also an act of interfering or interrupting the "field", an interference that re-directs or diffracts and also limits what can be seen and known. Therefore, my conclusion is not a presentation of any prodigious research *findings* - rather I offer a unique set of diffracted perspectives and analyses that co-emerged as part of my interference engagements.

To summarise, my research study aimed at understanding Muslim childhoods and madrasah spaces from a place-attuned and gender-focused perspective. I was especially interested in unfolding Muslim childhood ontologies and gendered pedagogies in relation to a current socio-historical-religious context wherein South African childhoods are rendered particularly vulnerable to conditions of socio-economic inequities, environmental precarity, spatial injustices and other related forms of violences. I also noted that extant studies on *madāris* in SA have mostly focused on the either the historical contexts or internal dynamics and educational philosophies of *madāris* or reflected on madrasah pedagogies at the nexus of democratic citizenship and religious identity-politics within a post-apartheid public sphere. My distinctive approach and contribution to these madrasah discourses, therefore, aimed at locating the madrasah space within a broader ecological dialogue that considers interweaving impacts of post-anthropocene conditions upon Muslim childhoods in SA. By framing my research questions around issues of gender and spatialities of Muslim childhoods, it allowed me to freshly bring in to conversation critical threads of race, class, geography, history, politics, economics and environmental concerns as imbricated in gendered pedagogical praxis.

This multi-lens perspective was aptly enabled by applying diffractive inquiry methods as advanced by critical posthumanist and feminist childhood educational thinkers. Filtering these *thinking with* tools through an Islamic eco-feminist ethic – my analytical lenses focused on threading together the historical-religious-spatial-pedagogical aspects of the madrasah space as a way of understanding Muslim childhood ontologies from an Islamic epistemological perspective. This novel approach to diffractive methods opened creative vistas for engaging childhood relational ontologies outside of posthumanist frameworks.

The four madrasah spaces introduced in this thesis, identified as Madrasah A, B, C and D, provided the place specific locations for interrogating broader historical, social and ecological issues as it relates to questions about gender and Islam. Each of the four madrasah spaces were storied using roads and walls as a diffractive lens for mapping childhood spatial encounters. By considering these material-discursive-affective factors as co-emergent agencies, the provocations I raised at each of the four madrasah sub-sections weaved childhood spatial stories of access, barriers, and movement as part of a gendered pedagogical experience. To cohere the salient points raised through these provocations and to map these micro-optic reflections within a broader discussion of Muslim childhoods, gender and the madrasah space, I conclude my thesis with the following thoughts on how the madrasah spaces I encountered are gendered.

6.1. Pedagogical Geographies of Childhood Space and Place

The teaching-learning and the performance of the ritual prayer stood out as a consistent pedagogical pattern at each of the four madrasah spaces. My study showed how the presence or the absence of walls had a determinative effect upon how children encounter prayer as a gendered praxis. The two spaces (Madrasah C and D) that were located as part of a masjid building that had clearly demarcated areas for male and female prayers organised their pedagogical choreographies around those divisions. Whilst the limitations of space, and the absence of wall as barriers at Madrasah A and B showed that the teaching-learning about ritual prayers were not differentiated in a similarly gendered way. The lack or presence of a dividing wall was not premised only on a theological position regarding the gendered arrangement of prayer performance – rather it was an artefact of geography and a matter of resources. In other words it was both a materially and discursively constituted pedagogical phenomena. The madrasah-masjid spaces that were better resourced, that were structurally mapped onto the geographical landscape as a permanent feature therefore included gendered spatial divisions.

In the madrasah spaces that were adapted, or lacked spatial permanency, the dividing of ritual space did not feature as part of the teaching-learning process. The fact that these gendered divisions are mainly dependant on available spatial options, means that children encounter religious space in vastly unequal ways, and therefore learn about gendered rituals in very different ways.

The gendered arrangement of prayer space is also a marking of peripheries, it creates the optics of spatial preference which often gets interpreted as an assumption of gendered ritual preference. I find this to be an important pedagogical consideration to note, particularly in relation to feminist discourses about Muslim women's equal access to prayer spaces and their marginal participatory experiences in congregational forms of worship. For example, in 1994 Muslim activist organisations like the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM) and the Claremont Main Road Masjid (CMRM) challenged this gendered division of ritual prayer space, by having both males and females share the "main" prayer space equally, and by having a woman *imām* participate in part of the Friday prayer rituals. This move was considered historically significant but was also differentially met within the broader South African Muslim community (Shaikh: 1994; Lehmann: 2012; Hoel: 2013).

On the one hand, like the Chain of Barakah, this reclaiming of equal sacred space captured the transformative mood of the political moment, framed as a "Gender Jihad" or an Islamic response to gender injustice - it was a move welcomed by many like- minded within the community. On the other hand, this disruption of traditional gendered ordering of space was also met with voluble Muslim public outrage, community censure and even threats of violence.

After almost 27 years since that bold claiming of equal space for women's ritual participation, at CMRM, it is not an unimportant point to note that *masājid* in SA remain largely male-led spaces. This, for me, raises many questions with regards to how issues of gender justice are understood and prioritised within the broader Muslim community, outside of progressive and activist spaces. Claiming an equal space at the *mimbar*, having equal access to and leadership roles within the masjid space has not emerged as the most pressing concern for Muslim women or gender rights in SA. This fact needs to be more reflexively engaged with and interrogated as to what gains are to be had if women do share and participate in ritual prayer space equally as men, if these roles have no consequence or does not impact upon gendered inequities outside of this space?

Muslim gendered spatial inequalities are not necessarily those that exist within the *masjid* space. Walls that divide, serve as barriers and deny equal access and opportunities to participation that form part of the geographical and environmental landscape of Muslim childhoods present a different scalar of concern.[172] By focusing on gender-just pedagogies located at a broader geographical, spatial and political scale, *madāris* can invite towards a more invested community conversation about childhood spatial injustices. This material-discursive *space,* in my opinion, is often neglected in Islamic gender-justice efforts.

6.2. Gendered Economies of Childhood Care and Responsibility

The madrasah spaces I observed rendered salient the important function that *madāris* serve as childhood spaces of care particularly in social contexts whereby child-safety concerns remain paramount. Child-care labours are intricately tied to broader un/employment and other economics related issues within the country. Apartheid spatial planning and the types of racialised communities that were constructed in those spaces, it was noted, had an onerous impact upon working class families and households. For example, coloured women as wage earners, organisers of homes but not heads of households, was identified as matrifocal households, an arrangement of unequal economic-power relations. Indian business-owners too, adapted a work-family ethic, where mothers and daughters contributed unpaid labours to build family-owned businesses. Black African communities, in particular, were spatially and economically excluded from economic participation, and often had to work menial and physically taxing jobs that included long commutes or migration to urban centres. Communal networks of care thus provided integral forms of child-caring support.

Post-apartheid redress policies such BBBEE (Broad Based Black Economic Employment Act 53 of 2003) are therefore intended to balance these types of past inequities in terms of providing opportunities for economic participation to those previously disadvantaged and socially marginalised. These policies are tied to building a national capitalist economy, whilst also being supplemented by state welfare support systems given SA's legacies of wide-scale race-based socio-economic inequalities. Developing transit access and schooling infrastructure, including school feeding-schemes, child support grants, health and other care support programs

[172] Notably, CMRM has taken up the lead in this by shifting focus from the "Gender Jihad" of the 1990s to a "Jihad on Poverty" coupled with a critical environmental and spatial justice approach https://cmrm.co.za/vision-and-mission/ (accessed 1 April 2021).

form part of the post-apartheid state's social-redress initiatives. These factors were highlighted as part of the broader communal contexts wherein the four madrasah are located.

Child-care, or the ability to adequately care for children whilst also participating in the job-market requires a concomitant investment in the provision child-caring options for working class families. This aspect however remains hugely under-resourced or neglected in areas like the Cape Flats. Current employment policies are structured to prioritise and facilitate the participation of women in the economy since historically they've been the most marginalised segment in terms of fair wage-earning opportunities. These are important pathways for women's economic independence and empowerment. However, when considered in relation to the lack of child-care options in tandem with certain traditional gendered family norms such as the view that Muslim men are religiously obligated to financially provide for their families and are expected to be the primary breadwinners – the impact of these employment policies becomes a precarious site for negotiating religious expectations. Single parent families, as well as unstable, dual or low-income households are lived realities that often make it more challenging to meet those expectations. There are implicit class biases in the ways that Muslim gendered roles and child-caring responsibilities are generally discussed within the tradition (Ayubi: 2020). These roles are often based upon the assumption that fathers and husbands have access to gainful employment thus bearing the sole responsibility for providing for their families. In contexts of high unemployment, spatial inequalities and other cyclical patterns of poverty, the responsibility of caring and providing for families is thus rendered a communal concern.

Domestic and other forms of gender-based violence are often exasperated by male unemployment and household income insecurity (Mathews *et al*: 2016). The continuing iterations of gangsterisms on the Cape Flats, for example, is intimately tied to this history of economic and spatial marginalization. Gang criminal activities and its attendant forms violent masculinities or "street virtuosos" provide some of the most expedient options for earning an income, that ensure protection and is a means of empowerment for many who remain excluded from economic opportunities.[173] Violence becomes a social currency and very often also the dominant cadence of what masculinity looks like for many children. Concomitantly, essentializing such male stereotypes is another form of violence, since it discounts the presence

[173] Research article by Dariusz Dziewaski uploaded 9 August 2020 https://theconversation.com/the-cape-town-gangsters-who-use-extreme-violence-to-operate-solo-143750 (accessed 27 February 2021).

and impact of alternate role-models that do exist despite these fraught socio-economic conditions. These are complexly layered socio-economic, political and gendered issues that are directly related to the role and functioning of *madāris* on the Cape Flats.

What emerged from my study is the fact that in these perilous socio-economic contexts, *madāris* are not only educative spaces for the transmission of religious knowledge, but are essentially communal spaces of caring, safety and protection.[174] The networks of care that create a sense of communality operate in direct and indirect ways. For example, the weekly feeding programs initiated at a more affluent madrasah space is implicitly entangled with children receiving food at a less well-resourced madrasah space. Similarly the supply of a well-point at a water-scarce madrasah site by an anonymous donor, or the collection of funds from children at one madrasah for sanitary products for women and girls unable to afford them, or the charitable networks that initiate communal food garden projects at madrasah sites or install mobile toilets in informal settlements are all related forms of Muslim communal care acts. These charitable expressions, often carried out nondescriptively as part of a broader religious social welfare ethic, falls outside of government structures yet provide a hugely important social function that help cushion existing governmental fissures that render communities and childhoods especially vulnerable. As such, *madāris* form part of a religious economy that shoulders the costs and responsibilities of child-care, which in socially fractured and neglected communities like the Cape Flats, provide a vital network of visible and invisible carers.

The types of caring labours I observed were suggestive of a collective community investment and religious responsibility towards children. The adult-child interactions I noted were mostly convivial and nurturing. Madrasah pedagogical relationships that included both male and female teachers as care-givers was a noteworthy and significant phenomenon. The interface of males as caring, kind with gentle dispositions, in a social context where violent forms of male bravado are normalised as survival registers, emerged as a particularly relevant instance of gendering of the madrasah space. Unlike western-secular early childhood learning spaces that are primarily feminised and female-dominant spaces where male presences are considered an anomaly (Van Polanen: 2017; Bentley: 2020), male teachers are common features and also leading figures in most *madāris*. The madrasah space collapses these gendered edges of care-

[174] *Imāms* have introduced a street *dhikr* in some of the most violent areas on the Cape Flats as a way of mitigating the sounds of gunfire in their neighbourhoods. Report by International Quran News Agency uploaded 2 March 2021.https://iqna.ir/en/news/3474137/muslim-scholars-in-south-africa-on-mission-to-reduce-gang-crimes (accessed 2 April 2021).

work since the role of a madrasah teacher is regarded as both an educator and a nurturer. The forms of masculinity I observed within these pedagogical spaces were filtered through expressions of gentleness and compassion towards the children in their care, as well as towards female colleagues. This of course does not imply that madrasah faculties are gender neutral or that there are no implicit assumptions of hierarchy between male and female teachers in terms of religious authority, just that these dynamics were not part of my own observational experiences. Absent from my gaze were the "behind-the-scenes" figures such as benefactors, madrasah trustees and governing bodies, which also limited my perspectival range of these madrasah optics. This invisiblised relationality also highlights how certain dependencies or relationships of trust can easily become a site of vulnerability. Incidents of children being abused and sexually violated by male madrasah teachers are increasingly being brought to the public's attention.[175] These serve as reminders that childhood spaces of care-giving and care-receiving are complexified by differential relationalities of power, and *madāris* are not inherently safe and nurturing spaces for children, rather they are potential sites for both positive and meaningful as well as toxic and harmful relationships.

6.3. Precarious Ecologies of Childhood Vulnerability and Inequality

Childhood relationalities to the environment emerged as another key feature from my study. Storying the spatialities of the four madrasahs highlighted how differently children encounter space, air, sounds, nature and the built environment. Thinking Muslim childhood spatialities in terms of prevailing discourses on climate crisis and the inequalities of post-anthropocene conditions, my study framed *madāris* as ecologically located and differently impacted by environmental precarity. Access to and relationships with nature as consequences of colonialist and apartheid racialised spatial policies were also highlighted. Intra-Muslim communal inequalities were most starkly evidenced by the spatial locations of *madāris* and the uneven distribution of resources, infrastructure and supportive networks available at each space. This ecological precarity is directly related to the historical movements and settlements of various Muslim communities, which in SA follows a definitive racialised pattern. What emerged from

[175] Several incidents between 2019-2021 have been reported in the media https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/family-devastated-after-madressa-teacher-allegedly-raped-boy-at-camp-40567426 (accessed 23 February 2021) https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/madressa-teacher-accused-of-sexually-assaulting-teen-girl-33064145 (accessed 23 February 2021) http://muslimviews.co.za/sexually-abused-by-a-darul-uloom-teacher/ (accessed 23 February 2021).

this eco-focused perspective is an understanding of Muslim childhoods that continues to be differentiated by race and racial divisions, post-apartheid.

Each of the four madrasah spaces featured a different set of ontological contexts, which offered a lens for mapping how environment affects pedagogical praxis. For example, Madrasah A (school-madrasah) with its monotone concrete high walls created an enclosed environment for the safety and protection of children and new school infrastructure from the violence of the streets on the outside. The securitised aesthetics of the space presented a consistent reminder of outside realities, and the inside provided only a temporary reprieve. This inside/outside binary however was also diffracted by a pedagogy that encouraged children to think beyond and outside their physical space, toward the otherworldly or their relationality to the metaphysical worlds. Acts of (teaching) prayer, or even engaging in "chat stations" and constructing religious texts on the "graffiti wall" – co-emerged as key pedagogical strategies adapted to the spatial confines of the school quadrant but also not limited by its material dimensions.

The ecologies of Madrasah D in District Six was mapped as an artefact of a community dispossessed of their homes and land. Displacement storied and shaped the tempo and pace of madrasah pedagogies in particular ways. Here the presence and absence of a community was multiply located, it was present in the memories of people and the memorialization of spaces, and its vitalities were held by intergenerational transfer of stories, practices and sounds. Notably, the emptiness of land space and absence of built environment was navigated by expanding the geographical and epistemological boundaries of the madrasah space, by physically moving to, and engaging with nature. The madrasah pedagogies included beach walks, mountain hikes and astronomical field trips, it adapted its schedule to weekends to accommodate the commuting needs of a displaced working-class community and extended the learning-caring relationship to include children's family members. These pedagogical practices co-created a childhood ontological world that is spatially and experientially more expansive.

Madrasah C formed part of an institutional environment, as such its pedagogical spaces included a much broader set of discursive, spatial and operational nuances. Of the four madrasah spaces, it was more organised and structured which also created a somewhat impersonal atmosphere. Pedagogical relationships were mediated by, and also centred on sets of prescribed textbooks, workbooks and formulaic routines. Thus, despite its aesthetically pleasing architecture, it spaciousness and other learning resources - the pedagogical setting

created an ambience that was more formal and instructional and where child-adult intra-actions were much less convivial than the other three spaces.

The final madrasah space located in a township that borders an ecologically protected nature reserve was identified as the most environmentally precarious of the four. Several interweaving factors rendered the madrasah and the children spatially vulnerable, including its designation as an "informal" settlement that prevents access to basic municipal services. The types of spatially and environmentally responsive pedagogies observed at Madrasah C were especially germane in capturing some of the inequalities of Muslim childhoods in SA. As a predominantly black African community, the madrasah is entangled in multiple strands of intra and external forms of prejudice and layered patterns of marginalization. The most notable are epistemic erasures of black African cultural experiences of Islam by the numerically and publicly more dominant expressions of Malay and Indian Muslims in SA. Historical patterns of exclusion for the black majority population in SA particularly in terms of education, land ownership and the formal economic sector create differential ontological worlds and unequal infrastructural resources for black African Muslims than compared to other more resourced SA Muslim communities. The post-apartheid madrasah landscape therefore reflects these historical patterns of racial division.

Contributions and recommendations for further research

In the final analysis, my diffractive reading of Muslim childhoods and madrasah spaces in SA contributes new knowledge in four interrelated areas,

- Decolonial gestures within the field of Religious Studies often involves grappling with historical epistemic hierarchies, navigating theological impulses as well as interrogating the "origins, methods and purposes" (Tayob, 2018:9) of the discipline. By introducing "diffractive methods" as one way of applying a decolonial lens to religious geographies, my study helps pilot a methodological path that holds implications for how notions of relationality are navigated within the study of religion as part of a decolonising epistemic modality.

- The ontological turn in contemporary Childhood Studies has shifted focus and expanded perspectives about childhoods to include historical, geographical, ecological, educational and political entanglements. Religion however has not been the focal site for understanding post-anthropocene childhood relational ontologies. Attending to this

aporia, my study contributes towards deepening current empathies about childhood ontological worlds by prefacing religious spatial and pedagogical encounters as a significant component Muslim children's lived realities.

- Feminist engagements within the study of Islam has for the most part overlooked Muslim childhood geographies as a locus for interrogating gendered praxis. My analysis therefore brings into conversation "age" and "ecology" as part of a broader understanding of gender relationalities and social relations as mediated by space, place, race and class. This rendering helps expand and enrich prevailing domains of Islamic feminist scholarship.

- The final, and central contribution my analysis makes is an appraisal of the complex role that madrasah spaces hold within the South African Muslim community as harnessing gender-positive, and also mitigating against gender-discriminatory childhood encounters. Gender, as made salient in this study, operates at varying social scalars, my study helps to bring these threads together so that each constitutive factor is seen as part of an entangled diffractive pattern and not as separate unrelated phenomena. This knowledge adds value and holds practical implications for how issues of gender, gender-based violence and gender inequalities are grappled with within the Muslim community. Gauging from public discourse and online social media debates that occur within the Muslim community, particularly when instances of Muslim gender violence, and child sexual abuses are highlighted in the media, there exists a huge disconnect between how Muslims understand religious ideals of gender as well as child-adult relations and the reality of these experiences. Gendered issues, generally, evoke strong resistance or are couched in sentiments of distrust about western, secular, liberal influences – the consequence of this rhetoric is a failure to critically deal with issues of gender discrimination, or relate these to the violences of spatial injustice, environmental precarity, socio-economic vulnerability and historical sediments of racial and ethnic marginalisation. My analysis therefore maps these entanglements and points to the fissures as well as recognises the potentia within madrasah spaces.

While these analytical contributions and creative modalities help sharpen academic "ways of noticing" and refine "thinking with" research practices within the field of Religious Studies, it

also nudges towards thinking and doing research more experimentally. As a way of enhancing and building upon the diffractive directions taken up in this thesis, I would recommend a deeper philosophical engagement with the epistemologies and ontologies of *tarbiyyah* as part of an Islamic feminist ethical praxis. This involves attending to the development of place-attuned, ecologically-just madrasah curricula, determining gender-conscious pedagogical frameworks and revising madrasah subject content for ellipses and exclusions. An eco-feminist articulation of madrasah spaces is one a way of contributing to, and building towards a future sympoietic vision where human, more-than-human, the material and metaphysical are in ethical alignment.

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Glossary

abaya	long length flowing dress
adab, pl. ***ādāb***	habits, dispositions or practical ethics.
afdakkies.	informal backyard homes
aḥādīth	prophetic narrations
ai-ya	write
akhlāq	moral training
amthāl	similitudes
aqidah.	doctrine
Asr	late afternoon prayer
athān	call to prayer
azeemat.	amulet
bālīgh	physical maturity
barakah	blessings
bāṭin	unseen/ imperceptible
batja	read
bid'a	innovation in religious matters
boeber	sweet rose flavoured milk drink
boeka	breaking of the fast at sunset
boere	farmers
burqah	long head-covering.
da'wā	propagation
daaljies	spicy fried savoury dish
deurmekaar	confusion, disorder, chaos
dhikr	spiritual remembrances
doepmal	naming ceremony at the birth of a child
du'āt	callers to the faith
duā	prayer, invocations
eiesoortig	own kind
faam-maak	memorization
Fajr	pre-dawn prayers
fard kifayah	societal, collective responsibility

fatāwā	religious edicts
fiqh	practical rulings
fiqh al-Muwatana	praxis of citizenship
gadat	prayer gatherings
ghoema	wooden barrel drum
ghusl	ritual body bath
ḥajj	ritual pilgrimage
ḥalāl	permissible
ḥalqah	informal circles of learning
ḥifẓ	memorization of the Qur’an
ḥijāb	modest dress / hair -covering
ḥisba	official of markets
ḥuqūq al wālidayn	rights of the parents
ḥuqūq al-atfāl	children’s rights
ḥuqūq	claims, entitlements, duties or responsibilities
ijāzah	permission
ikasi	African township
ilm-al-ḥadīth	study of prophetic literature
imām	religious leader
iqamah	pre-prayer invocation
ishārah	significations
istinjah	ablutions after using the toilet
jalsah	graduation
jamāt Khanna/ musalla	informal prayer space
jamāt	congregation
jamiat	religious body
janāzah	burial rituals
jilbāb	outer garment
kanala	ethic of mutual generosity
karamat	holy shrine
kersopstiek	lighting candles
khalifah	spiritual or trans-state movements
khanaqa	benevolent Sufi retreat
khitān	circumcision

khutbah	sermon
kitāb	books/ *madrasah* texts
kombuis taal	kitchen speak
koofie / fez	red Turkish headgear
koplesboek	mnemonic learning texts
kuttāb	childhood spaces of religious learning
lagu	melodious recitation
madrasah, pl. ***madāris***	places of religious learning
Maghrib	sunset prayer
makhlūq	created, creation
mārifah	intuitive knowledge
masjid, pl. ***masājid***	spaces of prayer
mashrabiyya	privacy-intimacy
mawlid al-nabī	birth of the prophet
miḥrāb	wall concave indicating prayer direction
mimbar	speaker platform
mochie	female shop-keeper
moppies	comical or satirical songs
mu'alim	male teacher
mu'alimah	female teacher
mu'athin	person that calls to prayer
muballigheen	propagation workers
muharram	Islamic new-year
muḥtasib	supervisor of the markets and public morals
mukallaf	intellectual maturity
mukhannathūn	effeminate males
nafs	inner self, ego, inherent nature
nagtroepe	night bands
nazam	rhyming
nederlandsliedjies	Dutch Afrikaans songs
nikah	marriage ceremony
niqāb	face veil
opokaa'sin.	communal children
ordentlikheid	decency and respectability

pir	spiritual guide
plankie skool	prefabricated wooden structure, school
qasidah	praise song
qiblah	prayer direction
qirāt	Qur'an recitation
Ramadan	Islamic month of fasting
rampies sny.	cutting fragrant leaves
ratiep	spiritual trance
riyāḍa	physical training
rizq	livelihood
sadaqah	charity
salat al-istisqah	prayer for rain
salawāt	invocations of blessings
Tuan Guru	esteemed master
twintag siefaat	twenty attributes
shurūr	commentaries
ṣabiy, pl. ***sibyān***	boy or male child
skollies	unemployed or insecure wage-earners.
slamse	Islamic
slawat	congratulatory gifts
smokkies	informal liquor outlets.
spaza / babbie	corner cafes
suluk	principles of conduct
ta'arruḍ	sexual harassment
ta'dib-i akhlaq	science of ethics
ta'dīb	moral training
ta'līm	religious instruction
tabula rasa	blank slate
ṭahārah	ritual purification
taḥfīẓ	Qur'an memorization
tamat	complete reading/ memorising the Qur'an
taqlīd	dogmatic
tarbiyyah	child nurturance
tariqah	spiritual path

tasawwuf	Islamic mysticism
tayammum	water-less ritual ablution
thawb	long robe
teitie	aunt
tik-koppe	crystal methamphetamine addicts
toellies	write
Ubuntu	humanness
Ukuma	cosmological relation
'ulamā	religious scholars
voorsingers	lead singers
voortrekkers	pioneers
walimah	marriage ceremony
wilāyat al-nafs	male guardianship over a child's person
wujūd	reality
ẓāhir	seen/apparent
zakāt	compulsory alms tax