

# Growing Babies, Growing faith: The Formation of Faith in The Life of the Child

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Dissertation submitted for the degree of

Masters of Social Science

in Anthropology,

School of African and Gender studies, Anthropology and Linguistics

Faculty of Humanities

University of Cape Town

2016

## **COMPULSORY DECLARATION**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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## ***Abstract***

The composition and formation of a young child's Muslim identity is situated within a contextual landscape of location, history, demographic, family, community and more which makes every child's upbringing unique. Through multiple interviews, visits and general discussions, this research sets out to understand how caregivers located in Cape Town conceptualise their world, make sense of incorporating religious practice and values into their children's daily lives, and how this is balanced with caregivers' perceptions of what a child can handle at two years old. From our interviews, three themes emerged: firstly, the histories, values and practices of caregivers shape the contextual environment of their children's religious upbringing. Secondly, in addition to Islamic education and practice, a child's feelings and emotions must be nurtured to foreground a positive association with and devotion to Islam. Lastly, notions of time demarcate and shape how caregivers temporalize their child-rearing practices. The aim of this research is to contribute towards the growing discourses around childhood and religion through an ethnography of child-rearing in Cape Town.

## *Acknowledgements*

I have always been a good student by completing just enough and sometimes doing a little more to go further in my academic career. I started my MA with the same ease. Got bumped around here and there, but still ended up gliding up into the next year. This dissertation unsettled me to say the least. It got under my skin, into my head and brought me many times, to a standstill. Hence the extra year I took to complete it. But that's not my fuss anymore, we take time to do the things we need to. I read that a good dissertation is a done dissertation and that is what I went for.

So let's picture me on my orange paraglide (I don't really have one) approaching a long stretch of still air with nothing to land on. It was an unexpected void that was not on my radar. My wings lost wind, I panicked, I dipped and bit my lip. But then a gust of wind picked me up and pushed me a little higher. Then another and another. It all merged into a constant wind that carried me across the void and towards a place where I could land. I looked down and saw people. I looked closer and saw people that I knew. They took deep breaths and blew out magic – they took enough breaths to blow me across the void. They've been blowing me over for eight months and more and I just landed.

A soppy thank you to:

Fiona Ross, supervisor extraordinaire. You had the perfect balance between being patient and stern.

Kauthar Davids, best neighbour/friend/sister who transcribed my interviews and sat with me late at night to discuss my ideas.

Raisa Moola, Someone new and forever with you. Edited my bad grammar and helped me with my idea and anxieties.

Sonya Cotton who said she was good at cutting words down and kept to her word.

My family at home. Not once did I feel pressured. Every day was love, support, teasing and understanding.

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## ***In Islam,***

*All children are born Muslim.*

When a woman's pregnancy reaches a hundred and twenty days, an angel is sent from God to her womb with instructions to blow *rūh* (the soul) into the foetus, rendering it human. Prior to this development, the Quran states that first *nutfah*, which is the mixed male and female fluid, occurs and becomes *'alaqah*, a blood clot, that gets lodged in the womb. Thereafter, the *mudhgha*, a chewed-up piece of flesh that is materialised with bones, marks the last process in the foetal formation. The merging of soul and flesh brings about *nafs* (the soul and flesh) is the point at which a foetus is recognised as a human with a soul. A soul that comes from God and per Islam, must return to God.

## ***Chapter 1: An Introduction***

## Growing Babies, Growing Faith: The Formation of Faith in The Life of the Child

At the tender age of twenty-three my mother was married to my father for four years and together they decided that they were ready to start a family. My mother could not fall pregnant. After nine months of struggling, she went on *Hajj* (the annual pilgrimage taken by Muslims as part of their religious obligation. It is also one of the five pillars of Islam) with my father and family. There she asked God to help her conceive and on her return, she went on *Comed* medication and a month later she fell pregnant with me. Part of her pregnancy was attributed to the medication, but most of all to God. My mother's pregnancy was uneventful and she fasted during the holy month of *Ramadaan* wherein Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset and abstain from any food, water, sexual activity and ill-mannerisms during that time. She did not believe that fasting could harm me - except for five days when she had the cold. I was overdue and born on the eighth of June. My father was present for the entire birth and when I was born they handed me to him and he recited the *athaan* in my right ear. The *athaan* is a call to prayer which signifies the start of each prayer five times a day. In my father's arms, the *athaan* was a call to Islam and a way of welcoming me to the earth. This was my first interpersonal religious experience outside the womb,<sup>1</sup> one that every Muslim baby goes through as being welcomed into the world officially.

My mother incorporated religious aspects into her everyday care of me. She acted as my proxy and said *bismillah* (translated as "In the name of God") every time she breastfed me and said *alhamdulillah* (translated as "All praise be to God") when I was finished. My mother's function as a proxy was underlined by her religious belief that whatever we do should be done with the mention of God. When she bathed and moisturised me she made short recitations called *thikr*, and every night she recited my *ash-hadu* (known as the Islamic testimony to reaffirm your belief as a Muslim) and lulled me to sleep with more *thikr*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> One could argue that the *athaan* was not my *first* interpersonal religious experience, since before my birth people prayed for my outcome as a good Muslim.

<sup>2</sup> The *ash-hadu* is the Islamic testimony to reaffirm your belief. The full testimony translates to, "I testify that there is no God except Allah and that the prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) is the last messenger of Allah". Someone needs to recite the same testimony someone before they 'revert' to Islam. *Thikr* refers to a spoken remembrance of God through repetition of god's names or attributes.

I grew up living next door to my grandparents and aunt who played important roles in me being raised as Muslim. My aunt recalled how they would remind me to say *bismillah* before I ate and *alhamdulillah* when I was finished. They taught me to enter the toilet with my left foot and exit with my right. She relayed that when we spent time together on Thursday nights, I enjoyed the *thikr* played on the radio. Lastly, they helped temporalise my day according to prayer times. For example, they would call me into the house because it was *maghrib*, and signifies the end of the day and start of the night.

My family did not overburden me with religious teachings and practice because according to them, a three-year-old could only comprehend a certain amount. However, it was important that they included and introduced me, even vaguely, to Islamic beliefs and practices. For as long as I can remember, Islam was always and continues to be part of my daily life. My understanding of ontology, family, interpersonal relations, food, performed identity, my future and religious subjectivity has always been grounded in an understanding of Islam. Our understanding of Islam was shaped by my family's own upbringing, the context and history of Cape Town and how they made meaning of Islam.

As a young woman who identifies as a Shafi Muslim, my religious identity is situated within a global context where Islam is considered through various definitive lenses. In America for example, since 9/11, Muslims and Islam have been identified as problematic and characterised by indoctrination and terrorism. For example, Donald Trump the current President of the United states of America, has vilified both Islam and Muslims as violent and oppressive. Thus, the religion I know and have come to accept as imbricate to my identity has been overshadowed by popular and authoritatively definitive voices featured in media and politics. By doing this research, I hope to demystify these hegemonic representations through an ethnography of everyday Muslim lives.

For my research, I look at Islam through child-rearing and how a child in the advent stages of language is shaped to have a specific Muslim subjectivity. Here, Muslim subjectivity refers to the personal belief an individual holds in Islam, one that is shaped by others and oneself throughout life. When I mention 'identity' I refer to the practices and indicators identified with Islam such as veiling, praying and language. While subjectivity refers to personal experience and interiority, identity refers to an exteriority that is embedded in the social sphere. One could say that my research is connected to Gottlieb's work among Beng babies

that understands how infants are raised according to their caregivers' spiritual beliefs. Similarly, I aim to understand how children are raised according to their caregivers' understanding of what it means to be a Muslim.<sup>7</sup> In both cases, the child begins as a soul who enters the world as a baby and received through a particular ontology by caregivers, which has strong implications for how these children are raised.

My research argues that to have a common religious subjectivity of 'Muslim' does not imply similar life experiences or beliefs among all Muslims. Furthermore, a child's religious identity and subjectivity is shaped by people who raise them and those who have a stake in the child's future, such as the community, neighbours, family and friends. The values that caregivers wish to pass on to their children depends on what is emphasised in terms of Islamic values, practice and etiquette. As a result, what is established are different ways in which children are raised as Muslim. Thus, my research asks, **“how is the composition and formation of a child's religious subjectivity understood by Muslim caregivers in the context of early childhood?”**

My fieldwork revealed that children are energetic, have short attention spans, listen when they choose and inhabit playful imaginaries. From my perspective, these children's religious subjectivities did not seem to preoccupy them amidst the things they amused themselves with. Therefore, I was drawn to their peripheries and spoke to children's caregivers who, in my research, are understood to create the contextual environment in which their children's religious subjectivities are formed. This is an old method of conducting qualitative research with children of such young ages; I gathered secondary information from those closest to the children's behaviour and the type of lifestyles they are incorporated into. With observations and interviews, I received a rich sense of how these children's lives were being cared for and their religious identities cultivated. Additionally, I also found what ideals the children were embedded in and the plans their caregivers had for their futures.

I listened intently and realised quickly – parenthood is an adventure of self-discovery, self-adjustment and an experience unique with every child. While caregivers greatly influence the formation of their children's religious identity and subjectivity, caregivers frequently revisit their own senses of faith – sometimes spurred on by their children. Caregivers state that who they were before their first child no longer withstood the motions of daily life - who they needed to be for their children takes priority. Caregivers envision their lives based on the

futures of their children – to provide for, spend time with, protect and raise them. With parenthood comes a new sense of what life is and how life should unfold, it draws on retrospect (reflecting on childhoods), the desire for a good future for the child and the effort to secure a lifestyle that supplements the growth of that child – in health, character and in their religious faith.

### **The context of home**

My Muslim identity is contested. On the one hand, in Cape Town my Muslim identity feels like a constituent of the city's social landscape. On the other hand, bearing a Muslim identity outside of or further than South Africa (given the current global air of Islamophobia) feels burdensome, negative or antagonistic.

In this section I contextualise my research in Cape Town by addressing the Muslim identity in two ways. Firstly, I will demonstrate how a Muslim identity shifts between the local and global contexts. Cape Town is part of and interacts with the global context and does not exist in isolation; Muslims locally are affected by global perceptions of the Muslim identity. To articulate, I provide a short description of particular events and processes that shape the emergence of hegemonic representations of Muslims. Many representations exist but to demonstrate shifts in the Muslim identity, I consider generally American-Eurocentric representations of Islam and Muslims.

Secondly, I will elaborate on the local context of Cape Town and situate the Muslim identity in the making of the city. I do so by drawing on David Chidester's (2000) framework of four contradictions that operate within the making of Cape Town's urban space. The aim is to illustrate how the current context of Muslims in Cape Town manifest the kaleidoscope of people found today, wherein the city is made through a dialectic of people and place. A place wherein a diversity of faiths and belief systems cohabit the city. This enables me to represent the current context and histories of the community into which the children at the centre of this study were born.

Since some participants and I are direct descendants from them, I focus on the social context of 'Cape Malay', "coloured" (racial terminology from the history of Apartheid to categorise people of mixed heritage) Muslims in Cape Town. Few participants originally come from

Johannesburg. By detailing some parts of my grandmother's life together with Chidester's contradictions, I demonstrate the social forces that displaced, excluded, contained and incorporated coloured people within Cape Town. Most importantly, I wish to demonstrate how the urban space of Cape Town was contested and negotiated for Muslims and other religions in order to plant roots in the city landscape.

### **A not so peaceful identity**<sup>3</sup>

When terrorist attacks of 9/11 performed under the banner of Islam alarmed the global citizenship, Muslims and their religion were increasingly scrutinized. Multiple representations of the 'Muslim identity' emerged as hegemonic descriptions of what that identity entailed – one that is increasingly perceived as oppressive or violent.<sup>4</sup> As Mamdani (2004) outlines, to bear an identifiable Muslim name became a political identity in post 9/11 America and has been felt by Muslims globally. The emergent discourse made explicit by President Bush was that there were good and bad Muslims. The latter considered destructive, fundamentalist, extremist and the former is considered "guilty" until proven innocent (Mamdani, 2004). What followed in the years to come was a change or devolution of the perception and reaction to Muslim people in some parts of the world, resulting in everyday discrimination against them. Therefore, in recent decades of turbulent politicised attention, Islam is represented as a problematic religion (Linjakumpu, 2008); one that comes specifically with potential threats of violence. These turbulences manifest via wars in Muslim countries such as Iraq and Palestine, the rise of ISIS, and the defamation of Muslim identity for political expedience by certain politicians such as Donald Trump<sup>5</sup>.

A salient characteristic of contemporary society is the use and influence of media platforms, such as customised websites, online news articles and social media like Facebook and Twitter; offspring of our globalised era. In *Politics of Piety*, Saba Mahmood denotes the current epoch of a globalised society wherein Muslims are raised with access to a vast array of Islamic

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<sup>3</sup> I do not provide great detail with regards to the global perception. The point I wish to highlight in the shift in the perception of a Muslim identity. The local context, history and perception is the detail that is of importance here.

<sup>4</sup> In Saba Mahmood's politics of piety, she mentions in discussions of women's agency and Islam, the religious subjectivity of women are always put between oppression and freedom. This is another representation of Islam.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/20/opinions/obeidallah-trump-anti-muslim/> for interviews and news snippets generated by Dean Obeidallah that revolves around Donald Trump's campaign and anti-Muslim sentiments. (Donald trump has since become President of the USA, 2017).

material, specifically through the advent of televisual and aural media which facilitates both access and proliferation of these materials. To extend Mahmood's (2005) observation, the proliferation of these materials is combined with commentary and evidence that present a different view of Islam. In other words, as a Muslim with access to these platforms and scholarship, I have seen depictions of Islam different to my own experiences. Importantly I have seen how different views could manifest in physical violence – an experience unfamiliar to me. As I will describe below, my life as a Muslim living in Cape Town has never been met with outward aggression. But this is not to say that hate crimes have not occurred. More recently, there was an incident involving a mosque in Kalk Bay that was defaced with pig's blood. Generally, I feel safe if I choose to wear a headscarf, I feel confident to express my Muslim identity to others, and my daily life is not punctuated with concern for whether my identity puts me in jeopardy.

### **History: colonialism and Apartheid. Curated movements of people within Cape Town.**

“If religion refers to ways of being human, to the symbolic resources and strategies deployed in negotiating a human identity, orientation, and habitation, then religion has increasingly been situated in urban environments” – Chidester, 2000.

According to Chidester (2000: 12), “religion and religions have been entangled in the conflicts and conquest, the displacement and containments, of specific colonial situations”. In his paper, Chidester maps the making of cities through the entanglement of spirit and matter. He presents four contradictions to trace historical events that inscribe a particular social landscape onto the city and contribute to the ways different religions are positioned and distributed in the city. The contradictions are presented as exclusion and incorporation, rural-urban migration, notions of centre and periphery, and lastly, religious meanings of Cape Town within the political economy of the sacred through contradictions, scarcity and surplus. To contextualise, I apply only three of the four contradictions since I do not detail the city's political economy of the sacred in terms of power and space.

For Chidester, the Mother City (Cape Town), was curated through historical events of the colonial project and thereafter the Apartheid city. He presents an historical context of religious presence in South Africa and how religious presence was negotiated in the colonial and Apartheid contexts. I use his framework to trace the formations of our current context that

myself and participants call home. The inquiry begins with colonialism.

The arrival and growth of European settlers engulfed and reformed the South African landscape through the creation of building blocks for a new conquest and establishment. Colonialism achieved its expansion through many ways, such as introducing their ways of transaction, to assimilating people into their way of life via education and religion (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997). In addition, and not so subtly, the introduction of taxation and use of violence and subjugation. Colonialists first denied any existence of indigenous religions and simultaneously enforced a totalitarian agenda that stripped people of their rights to land or control over their labour. Along with this denial came missionaries who sought to assimilate the 'religiousless' indigenous people into European beliefs and practice (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997). The urban space made for European settlers was segmented through the establishment and proliferation of boundaries that had tangible markers of separation such as statues, fences, and named areas. This resulted in a separation of people from people (Chidester, 2000). Here, the first contradiction of 'exclusion-incorporation' emerges. For colonialists, the establishment of boundaries secured their space by excluding 'others' from entering. As the colonial settlement grew, so did the import of slave labourers. Black and Brown people were incorporated in the making of the colonial city but excluded from enjoying the fruits of their labour. Between 1652 and 1807 Muslims came to the city as slave labourers. After the abolishment of slavery in 1834 more Muslims migrated to the Cape, specifically Muslim Indians who arrived in the Cape as merchants. Cape Malay Muslims were contained in designated areas such as District Six, The Malay Quarter and Signal Hill (Motala, 2013). One might say that the advent of Cape Town Muslim livelihoods began with their arrival on British and Dutch voyagers and rural-urban migration (Chidester, 2000).

The Apartheid City, as Chidester calls it, was a continuation of the colonial conquest, which was structured into a demarcated city between 1948 and 1994 (Chidester, 2000). According to Chidester, Apartheid governors carried out the same divisions and containments of colonialism to methodical extremes with the strategic design of colonial cities throughout Africa. In South Africa, these making of these cities later became entangled with Afrikaner religious nationalism wherein God was attributed with the successful domination of the indigenous people (Chidester, 2000). In 1948, when the National Party took control of the state, urban segregation was "justified as if it served the interests of all religions" (Chidester, 2000). In this

statement, the ‘interest’ of religious harmony was based on the racial division between coloured religions and white Christians (Chidester, 2000). From here onward, many divisive and regulatory laws were implemented. The result is an urban space that is experienced differently by “racially defined ‘citizens’ of its [colonial] centralised rule of law” (Chidester, 2000: 13).

My grandmother who is currently ninety-three, was born and raised in Bo-Kaap, Leeuwen Street, amongst many Muslim families which included my grandfather’s family. When the Group Areas Act was promulgated in 1950, the Bo-Kaap area was largely unaffected since it was an already established area for people of colour. Part of the legislation was the promise to ensure religious integrity by allowing each racial group to practice and develop along their own lines of language, culture and religion (Chidester, 2000). In my grandmother’s experience, the Muslim and Christian community she stayed in as a child was cohesive and had close relations. Children moved freely between neighbouring homes and a sense of community was strong between Muslim and non-Muslim families. The category of coloured and the experience of that identity brought families of all faiths into a cohesive community who shared in one another’s lives<sup>6</sup>. From the stories I have been told about “the old days”, people of different religions took part in one another’s religious events and celebrations. Until today, Muslims and Christians have intermarriages; families consist of both Muslim and Christian members, and people still partake in one another’s religious observances.

When they married, my grandparents moved to Loader Street until 1967, a year after the Group Areas Act was amended and re-implemented in 1966. The reimplementation of the Group Areas Act was a process of decentralising coloured people from the city centre to the peripheral areas we now call Southern Suburbs and Peninsula area (Chidester, 2000)<sup>7</sup>. The Group Areas Act of 1966 that enforced my grandparents’ removal resulted in a dispersion of Muslim families from the Cape Town Central Business District (CBD) area to the outskirts residential areas such as Heideveld, Grassy Park, Bonteheuwel and Wynberg, to name a few. My grandmother was dissatisfied with the home appointed to them in Heideveld and proactively

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<sup>6</sup> Even though the sense of community aligned with the National Party’s rationale for segregation, these people found common interest in the coloured identity as a tool of resistance against Apartheid.

<sup>7</sup> The District Six removals were a monumental event during Apartheid that uprooted and relocated sixty thousand coloured people from the central district into the Cape Flats. Mosques in the area remained, which suggested a religious significance for District Six (Chidester, 2000).

managed to acquire a home in Grassy Park which was reserved for younger couples only. She and my grandfather had nine children by then, all of whom were teenagers and young adults needing a bigger home.

My grandparents lived in Grassy Park from 1967 until 1991. My grandmother was a stay at home wife and caregiver. My grandfather was a clerk and worked near their house. Under colonialism and apartheid, black and coloured people were displaced to different places with differing proximity to the city CBD. Black people were pushed into temporary settlements such as Ndabeli, Khayelitsha and Langa that were situated on the outskirts of Cape Town.<sup>8</sup> People defined by the state as coloured lived and worked in the city much closer to the CBD. Again, the contradiction of exclusion and incorporation is evident here when the Coloured Preference Labour Act was implemented in 1955. The Act contributed to coloured Muslims' position in the city by keeping them within the city space.

During my grandparents' settlement in Grassy Park, Cape Town became a site of political contestation where those who were marginalised, relocated and regulated under the Apartheid regime, became deeply dissatisfied. Chidester (2000: 23) states that during the 1980s, "religion was particularly evident in the streets, as public rituals, from political funerals to street processions, were deployed as religious strategies in the struggle against Apartheid". Religious leaders of Christian, Muslim and other faiths banded together and purposefully performed religious practices in public spaces in aim of reclaiming the city. Different religions found common cause in rejecting a racialised curation of the city space and demonstrated their dissatisfaction through political funerals and political protests. With regards to the position of Muslims, Chidester mentions that the practice and development of Islam was not only a result of the arrival of Muslim slaves, but also through initiatives "in the local conversion and community formation" of Cape Town (Chidester, 2000: 26). Structurally, as early as the nineteenth century, Muslims outline the Cape with a sacred geography by erecting *karamats*; burial sites and tombs of Muslim activists and political prisoners. They also built mosques and *madrassahs* (Islamic schools) that are dispersed throughout the city. The city is a physical site on which religious meaning is inscribed and a space in which a Muslim identity is constituted.

Towards the end of the 1980s of which the most active political turbulence took place in Cape

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<sup>8</sup> The 'settlement' for black people was temporary and they were meant to be moved further out. Instead they remained in this liminal space.

Town, my father and his brothers began to marry and move out of their home in Grassy Park. My grandfather retired and my father bought two homes in Zeekoevlei after I was born in 1991. One for my grandparents and my aunt, and the other for my parents and myself next door. The city of Cape Town became accessible to coloured people who could afford to buy homes in different areas after the unrest of the 1980s. Although the remnants of these old excluded areas still remain, some could afford to relocate to within Cape Town. All my father's brothers relocated to different areas in Cape Town such as Kensington, Grassy Park, Wynberg and Muizenberg. The same distribution of people from the coloured areas occurred in many families, which resulted in the dispersion of coloured Muslims throughout the Cape. Especially those that came from the previously designated area of Bo-Kaap.

In 1999, the Cape Times, a local newspaper, published a series called "One City, Many Cultures" that explored the different religions, cultures and forms of daily life in the Cape (Chidester, 2000). This marked a public celebration of diversity in the Cape of what we now call "the rainbow nation". The public was encouraged to sign a pledge as a city to celebrate religious difference rather than tolerate it, and create a city that claimed an intercultural and interreligious context. Chidester adds that as the city was, it is difficult to distinguish between the different religious groups since each developed their own ways of mapping the city and inscribing religious significances. Thus, the different ways of religious mapping demonstrate an effect of many cities in one, "with multiple and multiplying religious significances" (Chidester, 2000: 24). Notwithstanding, the spatial history of Cape Town was and continues to be contested and negotiated among religious groups.

### **Home**

In 1999, my grandmother, aunt, mother, father and I moved out of Zeekoevlei to Muizenberg, and have lived there since. My cousins from my father's side are older than me, some married, some not; many moved out of home with some starting their own families. In this section, I have demonstrated that the making of Cape Town created and caused a particular place of Muslims in this city's social and physical landscape. By detailing parts of my grandmother's life that include details of my own, I illustrate a timeline of the city's making. With this dissertation, I mark a point in the city's contextual history – a point elaborated in this timeline. Lastly, to describe the context of Muslims in Cape Town, I choose to foreground it with the making of a Muslim identity. Currently, my Muslim identity sits heavy with some people in

the world.

My interest in Islam and the lived experience of Muslims comes from my own upbringing and the fact that I am a descendent of the history outlined above. The incentive to do research with a focus on Islam stems from my dissatisfaction with the representations of not only a violent religion, but violent Muslims. In part, my research aims to demystify the hegemonic representation of problematic people who follow an outdated religion. Overall, my intention is to show via a short ethnography the everyday lives of Muslim people in Cape Town, and how child-rearing is an important part of life.

This dissertation contains three ethnographic chapters namely *Shaping Religious Livelihoods*, *Instilling a feeling* and *Was. Is. Could be: Perspectives on Temporality*, that will delve into the modes of thought engaged during child-rearing. In *Shaping Religious Livelihoods*, I use emphasis and invitation as heuristic tools to help make sense of the varied beliefs, conceptualisations and practices that caregivers constitute into an Islamic foundation for their children. Each family puts emphasis on specific aspects of Islam such as *Salaah* (the five daily prayers), the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him - PBUH) or particular etiquettes which in turn shape the religious context of their children's lives.<sup>9</sup> This chapter aims to exemplify how a commonly-held identity of Muslim is not accompanied by identical perceptions or practices of child-rearing, but have myriad manifestations unique to each family. *Instilling a Feeling*, argues that the foundation cannot be grounded if a child's emotional disposition associated with being Muslim is not attended to. This chapter addresses how emotions are nurtured and mediated by caregivers in early childhood that are intended to hold a certain penchant towards God and Islam. Lastly, *Was.Is.Could be: Perspectives on Temporality* will look at how caregivers endow specific child-rearing practices with the certainty of the Hereafter and the passage of time. Here, the first seven years are flagged as a crucial time for caregivers to lay an Islamic foundation for their children.

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<sup>9</sup> When the prophet Muhammad's name is mentioned, it is followed with Peace Be Upon Him. In Arabic it is transliterated as "Sallallahu-'alyhi Wasallam". This is a sign of respect for his role as the prophet of Allah.

## *Chapter 2: In the field*

## A Matter of Conversation

One late afternoon, I visited Shahid and Taskeen to conduct a discussion regarding the role of emotions in raising Muslim children. Taskeen and Shahid have been married for fifteen years and have five children – four daughters and one son who is the youngest. I met them through my older cousin Nihaal who knew Shahid from high school and contacted him via Facebook to ask if him and his wife were willing to partake in my research. Shahid is an IT specialist and Taskeen used to work but decided to become a stay at home mother and home-school her children. In addition to their regular school curriculum, Taskeen takes her children for swimming and surfing lessons once a week, creative writing classes and other extra curricula activities. The family lives along the peninsula, close to the beach in a dense residential area called Strandfontein. Their home sits second from the corner along a frequented road and is marked by a red kiosk sign above their garage.<sup>10</sup> The atmosphere in their home was always energetic and filled with children's noises sounding in the background of our conversations. To have our chats, Taskeen, Shahid and I would go to their garage where they made a cosy spot for themselves with chairs, a makeshift table at the centre, draped fairy lights and a water canister on the side. There they smoked their cigarettes out of their children's sight and used that space to spend quality time together.

I sent Taskeen a message prior to my first visit on my interest in emotions and asked her to think about it. I arrived, said hi to the children and the three of us settled in the garage space and began our conversation. Taskeen started our conversation by mentioning that she generally thought a lot about how she was raising her children and our discussions thus far prompted her to revisit the question of raising her children with Islam. She said it was coincidental that I asked her about emotions because in that same week, she was driving with her oldest daughter and saw a series of posters that promoted a 'healing Jesus' campaign. Her eldest daughter light-heartedly stated that Jesus is dead and people should rather focus on healing those who are alive.

On a different day, they drove past the posters again and Taskeen pointed out to her daughter that they were still trying to heal Jesus but paused and thought she should take that

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<sup>10</sup> Taskeen and Shahid rented their garage out some years ago to Pakistani men who used this space as a tuck shop.

opportunity to explain what the campaign actually meant.<sup>11</sup> Thereafter she thought about how she, as someone who loves religion, could instil that same love in her children.

This thought came up to me and I was thinking about it quite a bit and I think that that is probably because a lot of the time as a parent you go a lot by instinct and you learn from what you did wrong with the one child and try to do better by the other child. You learn by instinct. And it brought me back to a note you made – Taskeen

Referring to a previous conversation between us, Taskeen here speaks about her experience with Lailah and the healing Jesus campaign as something which prompted her to think further about how she will raise her children to feel the same way about Islam as she does. Her statement was a continuation of thought processes that she often engaged with either on her own, with Shahid or when a pedagogical moment arose such as the example above. Taskeen and other caregivers frequently thought about what they were doing as parents and each day their children presented new situations that prompted more thought.

Through our conversations, caregivers gave me insight into how they conceptualised their world, how Islam became a pivotal tool in raising their children and what they had to do to raise a Muslim person. What emerged from fieldwork was my growing interest in caregivers' narratives and the questions followed: How did caregivers understand their role as parents and how to go about parenting? What gave them reassurance that their methods were correct, relevant or working? Where or who did their methods stem from? How did they make sense of their choices? Furthermore, amidst parenting, how did they bring religion into raising their children? What did they deem relevant to teach their children at two and half years old? Why? There was so many layers to parenting that I became engrossed in narratives of parenthood, religion and children.

My questions, I felt, could not be addressed with participant observation alone – relying on this method only or even favourably would limit my insight into the motivations, incentives and reasons behind caregivers' actions. To find out how caregivers envisioned their children's upbringing and what they expected out of their children's futures as Muslims, I favoured a

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<sup>11</sup> Here, Taskeen mentioned to her daughter that different religions focus on different aspects. She stated that the campaign was not saying we should heal Jesus but that Jesus was believed to have died for our sins and because of that he was given healing powers. That if people gave themselves to Jesus then they would be saved and that is an aspect of that religion that we should respect.

method of conversation. I sat down with participants in their homes and elicited conversations around their lived experiences as caregivers, and the thoughts they engaged with around childrearing that informed and shaped their experiences. I steered our conversations towards their beliefs, practices, histories and attached meanings. We exchanged stories and our personal knowledge and interpretations of Islam. Sometimes our opinions sparked friendly debate and other times, caregivers shared their deeply felt sentiments around raising their children Muslim. As Hockey and Forsey (2012: 71) mention,

“The reality of fieldwork is that we interview in order to find out what we do not and cannot know otherwise; to locate knowledge people carry in their heads, their ‘notions’, the beliefs and values driving their actions.”

Therefore, I chose to locate my ethnography in the realm of thoughts achieved through listening: a place of entry that was curious about parents’ personally held thoughts that motivated certain practices with their children. I posed questions such as, “what are the principles you intend to instil in your children?”, “how do you think your children should be taught now?”, “what are you trying to do at this specific age to give her that [Islamic] foundation?”. The aim was to elicit particular conversations around child-rearing and the role Islam played in that process. Caregivers and I had extended, casual conversations and the questions were either a product of the conversation or used to prompt a discussion.

According to Jacobson (1991), a research project that is interested in how people conceptualise their world and the world of others is concerned with “modes of thought”. My research considers how people have thought processes or frames of reference that dictate to them how they “should act, ought to act and are expected to act” (Jacobson, 1991: 10). When it came to raising children, the care administered for children was accompanied by extensive thoughts on what caregivers were doing and how to achieve certain ideals or expectations they had for their children. Therefore, the research focused on people’s ideas and beliefs, relating these where possible to observed behaviours. To share in the lives of participants is not limited to physically observing their interactions.<sup>12</sup> Instead, ethnography requires a sense of ‘being there’ and ‘being with’ our participants that is fundamental to notions of field-based study (Hockey and Forsey,

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<sup>12</sup> According to Hockey and Forsey (2012), ethnography and participant observation have been conflated and relegates ethnography of listening, for example, as a secondary source. Participants hold the methodological high ground and may debunk ethnographies that rely on different methods to not be considered ethnographic at all. Furthermore, the ability of the researcher to discern between what is said and what is actually done is a product of our unintentional arrogance.

2012). Furthermore, ethnography is the anthropologists means to “educate[s] our perception of the world, and open our eyes to other possibilities of being” (Ingold, 2008, as cited in Hockey and Forsey, 2012: 73). Hence, what I present is an ethnography composed of engaged listening and communication which provides a dimension other, but no less than, a visual report on my fieldwork experience.

The methodology I discuss below is concerned with the value that conversation – conducted through interviews - plays in the ethnographic process. Since my research dealt specifically with modes of thought, the conversational space brought many aspects of caregivers’ thoughts, ideals, worries and expectations to light. According to Briggs (2007), one cannot consider the experience and content of interviews without situating them within the larger ethnographic process since these in turn shape the conversation. The conversation was shaped in three ways: The parameters of research, the actual conversations that took place during research and lastly, the representation of those conversations in written form. Within the sections below, I will also include a discussion of ethics deliberated as part of my fieldwork discussion.

Firstly, sample selection criteria shaped the interviews by bringing ‘selected’ people to the space – a preparatory part of research that shaped the actual experience. Secondly, the actual interviewing process itself as underlined by the positionality between participants and myself in the researcher-researched dynamic. Here, a discussion of ethics becomes pertinent since this was our space of interpersonal engagement. Thirdly, the conversations are situated between ethical representation and the academic audience – referring to the expectations of a thesis within an academic context.

### **Research begins...**

My fieldwork experience was preceded by two processes of selection that influenced the ethnographic setting in two ways: Firstly, I was interested in exploring how religious life is formed in early childhood, specifically within the first three years. If research was done with older children my interviews with caregivers might have yielded different conversations and focus areas. I chose to look at children between the ages of two-and-a-half and three years old, being that these children were already weaned, in the advent stages of language and had

the ability to interact with caregivers in assertive ways. Some participants I drew on had much older children. The point of including their experiences was to gain insight into caregivers' own retrospect in raising their children. Secondly, the selection of Muslim participants shaped some of the content of our conversations that were oriented specifically around Islam. I used a method of snowball sampling where I asked family and friends if they knew anyone who met the above selection criteria and if they were willing to participate in my research. I also asked friends or family whom I knew were eligible, if they would be willing participants.<sup>13</sup> There were one or two potential participants who either did not respond to my attempts to include them or told me that they could not accommodate me.

The process of recruitment and rendering categories of eligibility served to foreground the process of fieldwork and the conversations within (Briggs, 2007). The criteria mentioned above presented conditions of inclusion and exclusion of certain people's experiences. In the end, I chose family members, an old friend and a family I was introduced to via my cousin.<sup>14</sup> I also conducted interviews with other caregivers to gather contributions of other children's lives to supplement the three core families. I aimed to demonstrate that child-rearing across a small sample of people of similar religious orientation, geographical location and contextual history varied.

### **Let's talk – Fieldwork begins**

I am a twenty-five-year-old woman, never married, an only child and with no children of my own. I was born and raised in Cape Town and grew up with my parents, grandmother and aunt who currently live with me. I would classify myself as a coloured that is recognizable through my accent and use of the English-Afrikaans mix and vernacular slang. I know my way around Cape Town especially the Southern suburbs, and as a Muslim I grew up knowing the traditions unique to Cape Town Muslims, such as the *ghadat*, which is a traditional

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<sup>13</sup> In *Do infants have religion: The spiritual lives of Beng babies* (Gottlieb, 1998) looks into the infancy of Beng babies and how their daily lives are crafted by spiritual beliefs of their caregivers. Might be of interest to read.

<sup>14</sup> Half way through my research, my friend and her husband pulled out of the research due to personal issues. However, they gave me permission to use the discussions we already had. Therefore, their input was used much less in the last two chapters.

practice of Muslims gathering to make *thikr*.<sup>15</sup> My positionality was labelled ‘insider’ to my place of research. <sup>16</sup> My participants shared the classification of coloured, they spoke and understood my vernacular language and most of them grew up with similar traditions and histories to my own. Participants ranged between twenty-seven and forty-years old, are spread around the southern suburbs of Cape Town, and most of them were born and raised here - one of the many things we had in common. In short, I did research at home, in a place I was comfortable in and with people I was comfortable with. Having this sense of community positively facilitated my research process from entry to exit and this status of so called, ‘insider’ is the first point I discuss as being a Cape Townian Muslim, researching Cape Townian Muslims.

When I visited Taskeen for the first time I was not nervous about the journey to her home because I knew the area, nor about meeting her because she and Shahid were friends of my cousin – I trusted that relationship. When I arrived at her home and managed to get the attention of her housekeeper (there was no bell), Taskeen let me in through the front gate. We greeted one another with *salaam* (a vernacular for the full greeting, ‘peace be upon you’), and she ushered me towards the living room where two of her children were playing. We sat opposite one another, she asked the housekeeper to bring us some coffee and I began our conversation by asking whether she read my proposal or not. From there, we talked for some time and it felt comfortable and easy. I did not have to monitor my slang, occasional Afrikaans expressions, and if I referred to a place in Cape Town, she knew exactly what I was talking about. There was a sense of mutual comfort and our meetings thereafter cultivated this and we struck a friendship.

On a separate occasion, I visited my uncle and aunt in Lansdowne where I have been numerous times before, except this time it was in the capacity of a researcher. I am close with both Yaqeen and Sarah and I have always been at ease in their space. Yaqeen is my mother’s younger brother. He is thirty-six years old and works as a finance accounts payable team leader. His wife, Sarah, is a criminal prosecutor, but she is currently at home caring for her two daughters, Maryam and Fatima (who was born after my fieldwork). On the day in

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<sup>15</sup> The *ghadat* is a traditional gathering that takes place especially on a Thursday night or when someone passes away. It is not a part of Islam, but originated from Muslims who gathered in private during colonial rule to keep their religion alive.

<sup>16</sup> I discuss later the problem with the “insider” status as an overly simplified position.

question, I parked my car in their backyard as usual, entered through the back door to the kitchen, and sat on the barstool whilst my aunt made me a sandwich. We chatted as we watched a rerun of a local Afrikaans soapy, *7de Laan* (translated as ‘7<sup>th</sup> Avenue’) and then Sarah put Maryam to bed for her afternoon nap. Yaqeen and Sarah live in a close knit residential area, with lovely neighbours whom they are close with. Aunt Shaheedah lives next door with her husband and five children, and during the week helps Sarah with the two girls. Ma and Pa live opposite, an elderly couple that Yaqeen and Sarah have adopted as grandparents. This neighbourly relationship is somewhat nostalgic of how my grandmother described the close-knit relationship between neighbours ‘back in the day’. There is a similar freedom of movement between my uncle, aunt and their neighbours’ homes. My conversations with them took place all over their home and was always amicable and productive – again, I found myself in a mutually comfortable space.

The comfort I felt in each family’s home was attributed to our mutual religion, historical identity, location and language. Our location in the social fabric of Cape Town brought about situated knowledge and shared amongst us. This sharing in one another’s positionality contributed hugely to my access into their homes, lives and personal stories. As Narayan (1993) frames it, my sense of mutuality with participants was based on the loci along which I aligned myself with participants. What set us apart was our everyday lives and factors such as age, gender, education and familial contexts. In her paper that problematizes the dichotomy of “insider” and “outsider”, Narayan (1993) also demonstrates how an anthropologist’s identity is multifaceted and not homogenous. To present my work as “insider” would neglect the globalised context in which we live and also the factors that separate me from participants. Instead, as Narayan indicates, my identity shifted between people and contexts depending on what I chose to present or inhibit of my identity in their company.

Becker, Boonzaier and Owen (2005) mention that this concept of the “insider” is underlined by the assumption that fieldwork is “quasi-natural”, and that the engagement between researcher and participants are more equal and intersubjective. Becker et. al. (2005) offer ‘citizen anthropologist’ as an alternative to the dichotomous insider/outsider, nuancing the “insider” status from the ‘identical positionality’ to a ‘shared positionality’. Like the insider researcher, the citizen anthropologist is trackable and accountable since she is perceived as “one of us”. As anthropologists, we are compelled to engage with our participants in a

meaningful manner. Therefore, as a coloured Muslim woman sharing in similar contexts to my participants, a sense of trust and reciprocity was generated more easily (Becker et. al. 2005).

My sense of rapport and immediate legitimacy in the field was accomplished through a relational negotiation of positionalities (Becker, et al., 2005; Taylor, 2011). In other words, my good ‘rapport’ was not based solely on my mutuality with participants, but how we reciprocally interacted in light thereof. This was exemplified during my conversations with Yaqeen and Sarah, and Taskeen and Shahid and our easy exchange of stories, information, beliefs and ideas. We allowed one another to express opinions and there were no abrupt interruptions without an apology. Sometimes contradictory opinions resulted in playful banter wherein everyone spoke equally - no single person dominated the conversation entirely. Furthermore, my level of insiderness/outsiderness was also dependent on my social situatedness to (and by) participants. With Shahid and Taskeen, I felt as though they were peers, and so my language and my crass humour was less censored. With Yaqeen and Sarah however, I had already met most of the people they referred to in their lives. My ethics of engagement differed in that my interactions with Yaqeen and Sarah were already circumscribed by our familial relation, and previously socialised by my family (Taylor, 2011). I did not freely divulge personal information as I did with Shahid and Taskeen; I was cognisant of any foul language and always made sure I addressed them the way I was taught to address elders. In this case I did not have a typical exit of the field, instead my researcher persona would be dropped and I would still be their niece – a relationship that required a different ethical engagement. In both cases, there was still a negotiation of positionality and intersubjectivity between us all. With Taskeen and Shahid I was a researcher first and friend second and with Yaqeen and Sarah I was a niece first and a researcher second.<sup>17</sup>

Although what I describe above reflects an amicable research experience, like Becker et. al. (2005) mention and which Taylor (2011) insists is that a researcher moves between this dichotomy of insider-outsider; and between feelings of being comfortable or stranger-like.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> In her analysis of positionality, Taylor (2011) discusses the difference and implication between making friends during research and doing research with close friends. One salient point is that the latter is much more sensitive in terms of ethical engagement.

<sup>18</sup> Citizen anthropologist accounts for the nuance in between this dichotomy by saying that the anthropologist shares a citizenship with participants, geographically, historically and politically. The concept acknowledges that even when one shares a lot with participants, at any moment during fieldwork, you can also feel

Narayan (1993: 679) proposes a “multiplexed subjectivity” and a “multiplex nature of identity” as ways of approaching the complexity presented by being an “insider”. When I began my research with Jameela and Riad, I felt the same ease, comfort and amicability in their home. They live in the farm-like area of Skaapkraal with Riad’s parents, sister, their two sons and Riad’s cousin in an adjacent home. Their driveway is opposite a field with horses and the air filled with the smell of compost. Their home occupied a small plot surrounded by larger area of grass fields. Jameela works as a receptionist at a hotel and Riad works as a panel beater. They married four years ago and have three children (their daughter was born post-fieldwork). In my interviews with Jameela, the conversation was nostalgic of our high school friendship – we made sarcastic jokes and laughed a lot. I had never met Riad prior to fieldwork even though I knew of him. When I did meet him when he come home from work one evening still in his blue overalls, my first impression was that he was kind, considerate and stern.

During our first interview, Riad disclosed that not too long before I arrived he was not a present father, he described his absence as catching on *kak* (‘shit’ in Afrikaans) with his friends (being naughty with his friends) but at some point realised that he was responsible for his wife and children and needed to change his ways. One might have described his reform as somewhat overzealous because he was very outspoken about his reading of Islam and often reprimanded his family members about whether they knew certain *hadith* (recorded messages from the prophet) from the prophet (PBUH) regarding their actions.<sup>19</sup> For instance, I was dishing food and used my right hand instead of my usual left because I felt surveillanced by him and did not want to be reprimanded for using my left. Jameela was happy about his reform, despite how overbearing he became, since he was home more and more involved with their sons. At the time of my research Riad was in the advent stages of his research into the prophets’ hadiths and he read extensively on the Prophet’s companions’ interpretive litany around the Prophet’s conduct and messages. Moreover, he tried to embody and become more like the prophet himself in appearance and character.

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estranged and like an outsider.

<sup>19</sup> During our chat in their room, Jameela and I heard Riad in the kitchen talking to his sister and asking her whether she knew why wearing a scarf was a *Sunnah* (practice) in Islam. She did not answer him and he proceeded to enlighten her on the respect the food must receive which is why a scarf is important when cooking.

I found the experience of interviewing Riad a little difficult. For example, one evening sitting at the table in the lounge area with Riad who wore his long (this colloquially refers to *abayah* which is the long, dress-like overalls Muslims wear to cover their bodies, mostly for prayer), a *fez* (a cap that Muslim men wear) and beard noticeably long, initially our interview flowed easily. We discovered we went to the same primary school Al-Azhar and reminisced on the teachers and eventual gang rivalry that fired shots across the school (which was when my mother decided to put me in another school). I noticed at first that when I would ask a question, Riad would not answer it but decide to give me information on Islam instead. This happened a few times and during my post-fieldwork analysis I noticed that I could have asked questions differently, but even simple questions were met with detours to a lesson on Islam. There was a moment when I felt antagonised as a Muslim woman that had a relatively extensive education in Islamic studies, Arabic and the Quraan. He was giving one of his detour lectures when he referred to the five pillars of Islam (these are five fulfilments a Muslim should complete in their life time namely, believe in God as one and prophet Muhammad as the last prophet, fast during the month of Ramadaan, give charity, and go on the holy pilgrimage called Hajj at least once) and asked me, “do you know the five pillars of Islam”? I said yes, but he explained them to me anyway. On a separate occasion, he asked me whether I knew what “da’wah” was and before I could answer he told me that it is the spreading of Islam to others.

I waltzed into their home and the interview, and expected things to go as smoothly as it did with the previously mentioned couples; even more so since we were similar in age. I overestimated my positionality as not only a Muslim or a friend, but as a friend who was in a similar age group. I also overestimated my ability to steer a conversation back to where I intended, or to bring Riad’s attention back to the question he detoured. Instead, I listened, bit my tongue whenever I strongly disagreed with him because I was cognisant of the friendship I had with Jameela. There were moments when I could speak up and voice my disagreement, but I did not want to upset Jameela. I sensed that she preferred to stay quiet when he became overbearing and I adopted the same response. Power relations became salient during our interviews. He dominated the flow of the conversation and he did not reciprocally engage the same way as the others; to me it was as though he assumed I was less religious or educated in

Islam than he was.<sup>20</sup> His tone and demeanour not only antagonised me, but took power away from me as the researcher and made me feel like the submissive student (Becker et. al. 2005). My interaction with Riad challenged my ethical engagement as I was mediated by my friendship with his wife and did not want to spoil it, especially since they were willing to make time for my research. I felt obliged to give him space to say what he wanted and I regretted being silent but at the time it felt necessary.

There were many advantages to having shared identities with participants, but also shortcomings and disadvantages. For one, access, rapport and communication was easy. We understood one another's vernacular language, shared a religious orientation that was historically situated in Cape Town, and relationships were amicable. To do research in one's own "backyard" is to have regular and ongoing contact with participants, create deeply embedded relationships, witness identity performances more saliently and more importantly, to be privy to undocumented historical knowledge of the people and phenomena under study (Taylor, 2011).

When it comes to ethical engagement and relations of power, this amicable feeling of doing research at home presented me with challenges. I assumed a position of control and expected all the interviews to have a certain flow. What became salient during my interviews with Riad and Yaqeen was that my positionality as friend/niece and researcher was a balancing act of academic credibility and friend/familial accountability (Taylor, 2011). Doing research at home also confounded my ability to interpret and recognise important details, and I was at risk of presenting an overly positive representation of participants I am close with. Therefore, as Taylor (2011: 19) mentioned succinctly,

‘the field’ is not only my site of work and learning, but it is my place of personal belonging, comfort, trust, friendship and love. The fragment actions of self in this instance are multiple and the ethical negotiations are complex.

Like Taylor's (2011) sentiment of doing research at home – at face value it was easy, but the longer I conducted research the more I had to embody different parts of myself – the open friend, the mindful niece and the ethical researcher. To do research at home has its

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<sup>20</sup> I generally do not wear a scarf for personal reasons and I do not present typically as a Muslim woman. Therefore, I felt as though he judged my religiosity and level of Islamic education from my appearance, although I could be mistaken.

advantages in that one may feel a sense of belonging and comfort. On the other hand, there is much more concern for ethical engagement. I had to take care of my relationships with participants, especially since they entrusted me with their thoughts, lamentations, histories and secrets. My responsibility during fieldwork was to interact with participants meaningfully and ethically. After I left the field, my responsibility changed from ethical engagement to ethical representation, as I show below. Moreover, once my research was complete I kept in contact with some participants namely my uncle and aunt and Taskeen and Shahid. For all participants, I offered to help their children determine career paths or adjust to university in future since my niche of interest resides in education. Although I might not see some participants as frequently as during fieldwork, I kept the relationships amicable and open for future correspondence. For me, it was not a matter of immediately reciprocating to participants for their help, but creating a long-term connection wherein I made myself available to them in future.

### **For Who?**

Once I left the field I printed my interviews and read over them several times while simultaneously listening to the recordings. I thematised parts of our conversations, highlighted important bits, wrote separate notes of analyses and filed them systematically in my ring-binder file. I sat with my friend, Kharnita, who transcribed the interviews for me and we discussed the parts of the interviews that stood out the most. I conversed with friends about certain themes I had in mind and passed these ideas on to my supervisor for approval. Writing my ethnography was a process shaped by my positionality and the people I chose to include in my thinking process.

Positionality and ethics shape how the interviews and observations are represented in written form. As the researcher, I left the field with my raw data and with the help of friends and my supervisor, made sense of my experience. The power dynamic shifted from negotiating our positionalities in the field, to me sitting with my laptop at my desk and putting my experience into words. As mentioned before, my relationships in the field were intimate and during this writing phase I was made aware of how the use and presentation of data will shape the reader's perception of me and those I did research with.

Therefore, multiple people hold a stake in this ethnography: my graduation is dependent on it, the institution is accountable for what I produce and participants entrusted me with information about their personal lives. Hence, I am positioned between the academic audience and participants. To Briggs (2007) there are two ways that provide a sense of equal contribution to a fair representation. Firstly, to include interviewees as co-authors makes them constitutive of the text as they are left with the final say regarding what raw data is included. Secondly, where transcribed data is included, as the researcher I must not exclude my questions or comments. The reason being that I would be neglecting my role in shaping the interviews themselves. When it comes to my relationships in the field, Taylor (2011) mentions that to omit certain information is political since trust is more fragile when you have close-knit relationships in the field. During fieldwork, I did bear witness to arguments or moments of extreme discomfort. I reiterated participants' right to prevent me from using it and even though I was granted permission to use it, I still do not feel comfortable doing so.

To conclude, a written representation is not simply putting experience into words. Instead, the ethnography is written by many people such as my participants, friends, supervisor and me. Furthermore, it is not about prioritising participants above my academia, nor vice versa. Albeit, the writing process is also a negotiation of ethically meeting certain criteria such as fulfilling the requirements of a dissertation while also using devices such as pseudonyms to protect participants. On the one hand, I am substantiating my work with literature and raw data and on the other, I am withholding certain pieces of information that I considered too private for publication. In the end, what is produced comes from a continuous negotiation of my positionality as the citizen (or previously detailed, "insider") anthropologist and researcher.

## ***Chapter 3: Literature***

## The Child – developing, agentive and vulnerable all at the same time.<sup>21</sup>

In 1986, Burman and Reynolds (1986) conducted research in South Africa focussing on children's upbringing. The authors discuss their research around the notion of a "divided society". South Africa during the 1980s was operated under Apartheid governance, fostering unequal power relations between white people and those, currently referred to as, 'people of colour' (POC).<sup>22</sup> Burman and Reynolds argue that, to make sense of the power relations experienced by South African citizens, children could not be excluded from social analysis. At the time that Burman and Reynolds (1986) published their book, children were not conceptualised as agentive beings that actively participated in their upbringing. This is because children were not considered contributors to society yet, and rather considered as neutral agents. Burman and Reynolds' (1986) research demonstrated a turning point in conceptions of the child by showing how children's presence in homes and communities largely affected population studies and statistics from consumption to education and politics. Although still sparse in literature, the twentieth century was considered to hold the greatest interest and publication in children and childhood studies. In this research the term, child, is used to cover infancy and early childhood (sometimes referred to toddlerhood denoting the first three years of the child's life) specifically. The concept of 'the child' underwent multiple turning points from the late 1800s till the current 2000s. In Islam, for example, the child is marked by innocence, lack of experience and in need of adult caregiving. These characterisations of the child had implications for the way they were treated and raised. Previously, children were considered less agentive and easily malleable given their lack of life experience (particularly in participants' own childhoods). Contrastingly, caregivers noted how children were more assertive and agentive now. These conceptions demonstrate how notions of malleability changed from being easy to being negotiated. Over time, perceptions of children changed and consequently the way they were treated.

The literature contained in this chapter will look at how the child, childhood and child-rearing have been part of major theoretical turns in the social sciences literature, specifically

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<sup>21</sup> Bluebond-Langer and Korbin (2007).

<sup>22</sup> POC is a contemporary term used to describe people who are of colour. It is currently used as a term of empowerment where people take ownership and pride in their identity, racial or otherwise and create a sense of community with other brown and black folks.

Anthropology. The argument is that conceptions of the child and childhood shape childrearing. The literature presented below attests to the different ways in which children were conceptualised historically and how their upbringing was framed in light thereof. I focus on particular turns presented during the 1900s - those that relate to the child and their upbringing.

First, through an historical overview, I will show how the child was conceptualised from a 'blank-slate' in early 1900s to an agentive human being in the 2000s. Secondly, as done in the literature here, I will discuss briefly the meaning of childhood as a separate consideration from the child. Thirdly, I will demonstrate how care-giving, its conceptualisation and ideas of practice, is an intimate part of studying children. Care-giving is further considered within Islam and how gender as a facet of raising Muslim children is paid little attention to.

### What and who is the child?

Historically, as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, children were invisible in social science research. This was largely due to the conception of the child at the time, as I have mentioned above (Burman & Reynolds, 1986; Hardman, 2001). According to Levine (2007) children only appeared in what we now consider social science literature before the 19<sup>th</sup> century from written experiences of travellers. Earlier conceptualisations of the child was characterised by rudimentary capacities, seen as passive objects compared to their adult counterparts and overall referred to metaphorically as blank slates (Shweder, Daily & Dixon, 2009; Hardman, 2001). The positioning of children as counterparts to adults created a linear progression from infant to adult. Thus, more attention was given to children's 'developmental process' where their learning processes and developmental changes during childhood had determinate implications for their outcome as adults (Levine, 2007). The interests in children's development encompassed both physical and cognitive attributes and spurred on the emergence of child and educational psychology (Levine, 2007).

The leading theorists within early psychology and childhood studies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were Piaget and Freud who each conceptualised the child for inquiry. Piaget considered children qualitatively different from adults and posited that children's cognitive processes were universally identical (Feinman and Lewis, 1991). Freud considered the child to be primitive, irrational and in need of civilisation (Feinman and Lewis, 1991). Both Piaget and Freud

contributed respectively to an evolutionist theory of childhood primarily concerned with establishing known stages of development (Shweder et. al. 2009). In other words, at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the child's conceptualisation was shaped by a focus on "nature": children were attributed with rudimentary cognitive process, a dash of primitiveness with an inability to reason in abstract ways and as eventual adults, required particular care to foster "civilised adults". Furthermore, these conceptualisations were situated in psychology which was the front-running discipline in understanding the child.

These early 20<sup>th</sup> century conceptualisations were critiqued in a few ways and gave way to different formulations of what the child was. Piaget was criticised for underestimating the cognitive complexity of children's minds, neglecting the role that context, social relations, environment and education played in their development, and for claiming universality.

Simultaneously, anthropologists began "uncovering" children in other parts of the world that were raised through different conceptualisations (Shweder et. al. 2009; Mead, 1928; 1930).

Freud, similarly, was criticised for claiming universality of children's psychosexual stage theory and for his assumption of 'primitivity' (Shweder et. al. 2009). In short, a major critique of early 20<sup>th</sup> century conceptualisation of children was that their agency was omitted or diminished.

Historically, anthropologists had to rely on other disciplines such as psychology to gain insight into the disposition of children and their cognitive capacities (Levine, 2007). Between 1928 and the 1980s anthropologists set out to record monographs of people with different child-rearing practices and demonstrated that universalism could not hold any authority – psychological theory was being tested. Rather, there was an evident move from children's "nature" towards children's "nurture" which spurred the major turning point in the conceptualisation of the child. This was characterised by a deviation from reductionist views that neglected context and agency, towards a look at the social life of children as active agents in their upbringing.

Even though childhood studies did not originate with anthropology, Levine (2007: 247-48) stated that the discipline put a "distinctive stamp as research to enhance knowledge of human variation for scientific and policy purposes". Anthropologists led by Mead and Malinowski created an anthropology of children grounded in fieldwork conducted across diverse 'cultures' (Levine, 2007). During the 1940s, ethnographies began to focus on children's

interpersonal relations with family and wider communities (Levine, 2007). Previous conceptions of the child decontextualized and stripped them of agentive participation in their developmental processes. In anthropology, the child was similarly illustrated but towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the child (and the infant) was recognised as a possessor of agency and situated in different contexts, social relations, time and place. This theoretical and methodological turn opened the space for conceptualising the child outside of ‘western’ conceptions.

Alma Gottlieb (1998) conducted research on Beng babies and how their caregivers conceptualised and cared for their infants. Beng babies were conceptualised as spiritual beings who came from a spirit world that was highly cosmopolitan, multilingual and more attractive than the life they were born into. Caregivers’ roles were crafted around this conceptualisation where they had to coax their children to remain in this world - shaping the interactions with them. Here, the Beng baby was defined by its soul – as divine, equivalent to that of an elderly person and needed to be anchored in this world by caregivers. The presence of another world and the child imbued with a soul is common in Islam too. However, the conceptualisation and care for the child differed, as I will demonstrate.

The construction of the child has led to constructions of childhood and subsequently that of child-rearing. My interest in childhood does not focus on the difference between childhood and adulthood nor the relations between. My interest is in how that period of being a child is conceptualised by parents and the implication their understanding has for caregiving.

According to Levine (2007), one thing that was common across people’s notions of childhood was that it was a temporal stage during an individual’s life, which I will discuss briefly below.

### Childhood

In Islam, the period of childhood is characterised by innocence where the prepubescent child is not held accountable for sins. Once the child reaches puberty, they are considered adults who are responsible for their own sins. According to James and Prout (2015), childhood as a social construction provides an interpretive frame for understanding the early years of life. Furthermore, childhood cannot be separated from other variables such as class, gender or ‘ethnicity’ (James & Prout, 2015) and the idea of a ‘normal’ childhood differs along different

oriented goals, values and practices (Shweder et. al. 2009). Therefore, the construction of the child and childhood in all their variance is two parts out of three (according to my literary sub themes) of studying the lives of children. In the interest of my research, the way the child and childhood (marked by prepubescence) as conceptualised by caregivers shapes the way religion is incorporated into their daily lives. In other words, the elements included in this research consist of the child, their childhood and their upbringing.

### Growing babies

The conversations generated around child-rearing were not monolithic, since ways in which children are raised can be passionately promoted or actively contested (Shweder et. al. 2009). What can be said, then, is that child-rearing is comprised of the different ways in which children and childhood are conceptualised together in a context and in light thereof, how people generate social relations with and around the child (Shweder et al. 2009; Froerer, 2009; Deloache & Gottlieb, 2000).<sup>23</sup> Deloache and Gottlieb (2000) conducted an ethnography of child-rearing across seven groups of people and formatted the book into a child-rearing guide with a fictional anthropologist reporting on factual fieldwork. The authors mention that each group studied consider their way of caring for infants as the correct and ‘normal’ way – “a simple matter of common sense” (Deloache & Gottlieb, 2000: 5).

From their research Deloache and Gottlieb (2000) assert that it was important to most parents that their children shared in their deeply held values and beliefs. Additionally, most caregivers aimed to impart certain foundations and beliefs to their children, whether these derived from religious tradition or not (Deloache & Gottlieb, 2000).<sup>24</sup> This early education was defined by purpose and quality with a provision in language and a cognitively stimulating environment. The content and deliverance of that education stemmed from caregivers’ perceptions of children which filtered through complex sets of lenses that yielded particular child care narrative (Shweder et al. 2009).<sup>42</sup> Therefore, child-rearing is weighted with the responsibility on caregivers to raise children with ways to navigate their social and

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<sup>23</sup> In the parent-child relationship grounded in a domestic hierarchy, the child is ranked lower and is expected to be respectful towards adults and rather stay quiet than being talkative with adult company (Shweder et. al.

<sup>24</sup> Shweder et. al. (2009) mentioned that over the past few years, early childhood came to be known as a sort of early schooling experience – child rearing that is shaped by an educational paradigm.<sup>42</sup> Such as history, current situation, values, religion and more.

interpersonal relations and to equip them with beliefs and values that will carry them through until adulthood – like adults, children are important contributors to their families and community (Burman and Reynolds, 1986).

Child-rearing does not only take place in the home or between the child and parents. As Shweder et al. (2009) mention, the care of young children is shared among multiple people, from siblings, to the extended family such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, to the wider community such as day care, friendship networks and neighbours (Scourfield et. al. 2013). Therefore, it is difficult to pinpoint the formal and informal care the child receives and to assert who plays particular roles in the child's rearing and how. In the context of their research among Muslim families in Cardiff, Scourfield et. al (2013) state that “the establishment of close social networks of wider family and Muslim friends serves to maintain a ‘moral community’ and ‘moral space’ suffused with Islamic values”. The child's religious identity then is situated farther than the caregivers to extended family and community. This means that the child's religious subjectivity is fostered at home and reinforced by closer social networks that children spend time in. Therefore, every child's religious identity and subjectivity has multiple and different stakeholders that contribute to their sense of being Muslim. In sum, each child's Muslim subjectivity is made of numerous contributions from those who surround and interact with them.

### Conceptualising the religious child, religious childhood and religious upbringing

The psychology literature regarding toddlers' religious nurturance predominantly focusses on their psychological and cognitive development which is extrapolated to their social worlds. Yust (2003), for example, considers the infant or toddler to lack a sense of God at first, however the child's potential belief in God is predetermined by their amenability to learn rituals and practice through sensorimotor and practical exploration. As the child ages, the child experiences cognitive developmental stages which expands their awareness as they age (Kirk, 2004 and Yust 2003). Sensorimotor sensations, emotional attachment, and a sense of object permanence are all considered to play crucial roles in religious composition – especially within the first years of life. Similarly, Fowler's (1991) Faith Development Theory (FDT) posits a similar relationship between developing cognition and the child's sense of faith. FDT assumes that ‘religious cognition’ has an unquestioned adoption of “the structural-developmental ‘logic of development’” (Strieb, 1990: 143-44) that progresses evenly as the

child ages. The aforementioned authors provide substantial work on the role of cognition in forming ‘faith’, however did not necessarily demonstrate how faith manifests in social life. The main critique offered is that the acquisition of faith cannot be reduced to cognition, but that there is more complexity and nuance to an individual’s religious experience (Strieb, 1990); specifically, life history and changing contexts.

In a much more theological tone, Love (1991) speaks specifically about Christianity and situates the child’s faith as an innate attribute, a gift from God to be used in establishing a relationship with Him.<sup>25</sup> For her, the formation of faith in a young child is directly influenced by establishing foundations such as trust, imagination and ritualization. She concludes by saying “children who are part of a faith community are enriched as they journey from faith in parents’ as gods, to faith in the parents’ God, to a faith of their own” (Love, 1991: 9). She concludes by saying that “children who are part of a faith community are enriched as they journey from faith in parents as gods, to faith in the parents’ God, to a faith of their own” (Love, 1991: 9). When it comes to the role that religion plays in a child’s life, most of the literature is concerned with whether faith is possible at a very young age and if so, how? The conclusions mention that ‘faith’ is possible at young ages, however the manifestations are through caregivers as conduits towards such faith.

Scourfield et al.’s (2013) work called *Muslim Childhoods* contextualised in Britain among immigrant Muslim families has the most relevance to my research. The authors perceive the toddler to be active participants in their upbringing although they do conclude that children’s agency in Islamic nurture seems to be fairly limited (Scourfield et. al. 2013). In Scourfield et al.’s (2013) research, this ‘limited agency’ was characteristic of early and middle childhood and attributed to children’s ‘social horizons’ being limited by their caregivers. Furthermore, it is reiterated that all children are born Muslim and for that ontology to flourish depends on the familial upbringing and the wider social environment and education.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the limited agency here is not due to a conceptualisation of the child’s ability to take part in their religious upbringing, but due to the social horizons shaped by their caregivers. To stay within

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<sup>25</sup> Islam also situates faith and belief to be an innate characteristic that needs to be nurtured.

<sup>26</sup> As mentioned in the above footnote, being born “Muslim” implies that people are born as worshippers of God and have some innate penchant towards religious belief.

the conception of childhood as an early schooling experience, Scourfield et. al (2013) highlight the term *transmission* to refer to intergenerational patterns of imparting beliefs and values from older generations to younger ones. The authors outline the meaning of education in Islam which for my research was pertinent.

Scourfield et. al. (2013) use three Arabic terms to form a framework of education in Islam which ties directly to raising a Muslim child. The first term is *Tarbiyah* which means ‘to grow.’ It entails developing individual potential or nurturing and guiding young people to maturity. Here, *tarbiyah* refers to the responsibility on caregivers to raise children *with* Islam and to do so from a very young age till maturity. The second term is *Ta’lim* which means “to know” and it refers to imparting and receiving knowledge through training, instruction or teaching. In the context of child-rearing, *ta’lim* speaks to the foundational years during childhood; what to impart to children; who is responsible for that child’s Islamic education; and what is appropriate for specific ages. The last term is *tadib* which means to be “refined and disciplined” and the term is extended to *’adab* which refers to “good manners and personal conduct” which is achieved through an understanding of the basic rules of Islam. In other words, basic Islamic rules of social and interpersonal etiquette.<sup>27</sup>

Considering Scourfield et al’s (2013) framework, the meaning of education in Islam is applicable to how a child is conceived, how childhood is understood and how child-rearing could take place. According to Scourfield et. al. (2013: 22) Islamic education covers individual development and God consciousness, the transmission of knowledge, and the development of an understanding society and its social and moral rules.

### Gaps

The literature around religious child-rearing and the conceptions of children and childhood give little if no attention to gender as an aspect of religious subjectivity and identity in early childhood. All the above-mentioned theorists, besides Scourfield et al. (2013), seem to consider children as a homogenous group where differences in sex and gender play no part in their religious upbringing. There is plentiful research on gender, especially on gender and

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<sup>27</sup> As I will demonstrate in the chapters that follow, etiquette and respect are salient themes in what caregivers want to raise their children with.

Islam.<sup>28</sup> However, more attention is paid to Muslims during adulthood than children during early childhood. Al-Asi (2012) was an Islamic scholar who makes explicit links between early childhood and gender. He addresses the gendered socialisation of girls and boys into particular roles as Muslim women and men. The use of gender to understand children's early religious upbringing is something I refer to as gendered faith. In other words, there is a general framework of Islam that is incumbent on every Muslim person, referring here specifically to the five pillars of Islam. However, the lived experience of a Muslim is shaped by roles men and women must embody as part of being Muslim. Furthermore, these gendered roles contribute to religious organisation that is manifested through separation, for example, in prayer. Additionally, the roles Muslims occupy such as male and female are suffused with Islamic values that have strong gendered underpinnings. Women are meant to assume 'hidden roles' in religious organisation and men are meant to assume roles of leadership (Scourfield et al., 2012). Therefore, when I refer to gendered faith I refer to the demarcated roles of males and females that caregivers have in mind during their children's early childhood. Furthermore, gendered faith constitutes practices and associations aimed at shaping children into male and female roles such as sending young boys to mosque with their father and keeping girls at home.<sup>29</sup>

Scourfield et al. (2013) note in their research, early childhood and middle childhood have similar regimes of learning for boys and girls alike. Gendered faith did not seem germane in early childhood and more attention was given to their introduction into Islam rather than their roles as Muslim boys and girls – at least not yet. The gendered roles that the authors did highlight was between mothers and fathers. Mothers were considered more heavily involved in their children's religious care than fathers, whose involvement varied but less than mothers.<sup>30</sup> When it comes to a discussion of gender, adults were paid more attention to. My research intends to demonstrate how gendered ideas and expectations form part of caregivers' modes of thought subtly impacting their children's daily lives.

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<sup>28</sup> In these works, a great deal of attention is paid to women's place in Islam.

<sup>29</sup> Eventually, when the boy is older, going to mosque every Friday will become obligatory and therefore including the child in Friday routines, if the father is available, will normalise this practice.

<sup>30</sup> The varied role that fathers played in their children's religious upbringing was attributed to their work schedules and having limited time with their children.

## Conclusion

For the most part, reading these authors from different disciplines and the chronological order in which the conceptualisations of the child changed over time is interesting. The way the child's conceptualisation has changed helps me understand how caregiving was not wholly systematic but largely unpredictable and even experimental.<sup>31</sup> Theoretically the shift from passive to agentive children benefited research into children's livelihoods because a bigger picture could be drawn from their daily lives. Additionally, by viewing children as active agents, researchers could show how children shaped their own upbringing by affecting those who cared for them. For my own research, viewing children as active participants in their upbringing I show the manifold ways in which caregivers go about raising their children, specifically as Muslims.

When it comes to Islam, the conceptualisation of the child as innocent echoed the blank slates they started out as in the social science literature. It is interesting to note how this relationship between conceptualising the child and their subsequent care is envisioned within Islam. What emerges for me is the difference made between the child's ontology and their conceptualisation. The child's ontology is marked by the innocence and vulnerability derived from Islamic canon, which remains in caregivers' anecdotes. The way caregivers conceptualise their children however is based on their experiences with their children. Children have unique personalities, present their caregivers with different challenges and caregivers take their assertions into account when administering care. Therefore, the child's ontology remains the same over time however, the way the child is conceptualised and consequently treated changes similar to the literary turns presented above.

Lastly, gendered faith is not something I expected to highlight especially in a review of Islam and child-rearing. The literature presented above on children's religion focuses on whether a child attains religion or not and concludes positively. However, what seems scarce is a consideration of how particular religions, such as Islam, have strongly demarcated roles for men and women. My research demonstrates how caregivers envision their children to have attributes that are consistent with gendered expectations of Muslim girls and boys. Compassion and softness are valued for a girl. Leadership and strength are valued for a boy.

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<sup>31</sup> I develop this idea of child-rearing as experimental in ethnographic chapters that follow.

To end off, my research intends to demonstrate different themes in studying children's religiosity. Religion in this research is not an addition to everyday life but rather a way of life. Therefore, the implication that Islam has for children's lives is vast and here I present a piece of the larger inquiry - one that may contribute to the growing literature on intersections between child rearing and religion.

## ***Chapter 4: Shaping Religious Livelihoods***

## Raising Muslim Infants: What does it mean to be a Muslim?

Recently, over our post-supper teatime, my mother lamented that her generation of parents did not raise their children to prioritize Islam. Her voice and expression revealed concern that the Muslim community is much weaker in contemporary society compared to the many generations of Muslims prior. With a spoonful of pudding and sips of her tea my mother continued that my generation was raised with things that hers could not afford when they were young. My parents' childhoods were not marked by an abundance of things compared to mine, nor did they have the money to afford luxury. To my mother, Islam is in a crisis because my generation of Muslims make Islam secondary and she attributes this to an upbringing of materiality rather than a spiritual one. The materiality she refers to here are things or commodities. She turned her attention to me and ended things with a clear instruction: that I should take note of what she said because it is now my duty to raise my children differently so that they may contribute towards a stronger generation of Muslims. In other words, when I become a parent one day (and I think I intend to), raising my children with Islam should be my number one priority.

My mother spoke from a perspective that prioritises Islam above all else in her daily life. She illuminates how a child's upbringing as a Muslim person is largely dependent on the caregiver – who they are, where they come from and how they understand Islam. Lastly, she positions herself as a stakeholder in future generations of Muslims and as a caregiver who has already raised her child, who now sees fault but also potential in how Muslims are made.<sup>32</sup>

My mother's concern opens the conversation of what it means to be a Muslim and what it means to be a Muslim parent. In this chapter I demonstrate that a significant part of parental work in relation to cultivating dispositions parents associate with Muslim subjectivity in their infants lie in the ways they emphasise aspects of the religion and its practice, and in the invitation, they proffer to children through simple acts performed by children as part of family rituals. These two ideas – emphasis and invitation – suggest that when “one is born Muslim”, the socialisation of infants involves gradual work, as I will demonstrate below.

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<sup>32</sup> In her anecdote my mother prioritises Islam and as a Muslim she also positions herself as a participant in continuing not only the presence of Islam in generations to come, but a particular lived experience of the religion. To her, Muslims all over the world have a similar duty to ensure that Islam does not wither, but remains strong with every generation.

### What is a Muslim?

The evening was cold when I sat with Riad in the lounge at the table while Jameela cooked, and their boys, Fawaz and Israr, played nearby. We spoke about his schooling career at Al-Azhar and the impact it made on his religious life. Riad told me much about the Islamic reading he was doing at the time, mainly Al-Ghazali, an old Islamic scholar.<sup>33</sup> Riad likened a Muslim's life to an open book test and claimed it was easy: God gave us the Quraan and *ahadith* and it is up to Muslims to live accordingly.<sup>34</sup> I asked him if he believed his sons had a sense of their Muslim identities and what those meant. Before he answered, he flipped the question onto me and asked me, "What is Muslim? In your view, what does it mean to be Muslim?" Caught off guard, I told him that,

"I think for me what makes you Muslim is what guides your morals and your ethics in terms of religious scripture, that you believe there is only one God ... that you believe Muhammad ( Peace Be Upon Him) was the last prophet and that you basically follow and accept all the traditions and so on that goes with what is put under the label of Islam."

In retrospect, my answer could have been more elegant had I expected the question. Riad sat in his chair, eyes pinched with a contemplative expression on his face. He then said, "For me, Islam means to be a submitter", and mentioned that he used to be a 'wrong doer' until realising that "in order to be a Muslim you have to submit your will to the will of your Allah".<sup>35</sup>

Riad and Jameela come from different religious backgrounds: Riad was raised as a Muslim from birth and Jameela, who was previously Christian, 'reverted' when she was approximately twenty years old. Often during conversations, if I used the word 'convert' to

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<sup>33</sup> For a little while we dwelled on the fact that we both attended Al-Azhar during primary school, but unlike him, I did not stay till matric. My mother put me in a different school due to the gang violence that threatened my safety then.

<sup>34</sup> Following his statement, Riad said that life was also a test from God which is why we encounter challenges that test our belief, in that way life has its ups and downs and to follow the Sunnah would help one overcome life's hardships.

<sup>35</sup> Allah is a name for God.

refer to someone becoming Muslim, I would be corrected to say ‘revert’. The reason given to me was that everyone is born Muslim and therefore if one decides to become Muslim, they ‘revert ‘to Islam. In our joint conversation, their religious ontologies came to the fore, namely as a comparative exercise in which they compared their level of religiosity.<sup>36</sup> The fact that Riad and Jameela talked about their religious identities in relation to one another was interesting to me since it highlights the interpersonal relations and even tensions between them as caregivers. They made it apparent that to assume a Muslim subjectivity required an active participation in the process of forming that subjectivity and that as spouses, their religiosities were imbricate in one another. Their religiosity constituted the numerous aspects of religious beliefs, practices, values and expectations aligned with being Muslim.

Jameela and I sat on the grass one sunny afternoon. Israr was snuggled in her lap, partially awake and Fawaz was looking at the horses opposite with their domestic worker. We spoke about Riad and his recent reform, specifically his strict adherence to the prophet’s *hadiths* (messages) and *sunnah* (practices that the prophet administered in his daily life and that we as Muslims should adhere to). I asked her how that made her feel and what it meant for her. She said that Riad was home more often and thus became actively involved in *her* religiosity. For the past three years Riad was not a present husband or father, and to have him home was a blessing to her. She metaphorically described her religiosity as being at the bottom of the mountain and having a long way to climb before she could meet him on top. There was an assumption that Riad was ahead of her in their journey towards the specific version of ‘Muslim’ they wanted for themselves. Riad mentioned his process of adopting the *hadiths* into his daily life one evening when I visited them for our one on one conversation. Jameela’s spaghetti bolognese smelled delicious and Riad made us tea. After he caught me off guard by asking me what being Muslim meant to me, he continued to say,

“Look, I feel everybody in their life will go through a point of *ghidaya* (“Guidance”, specifically guidance from God), let’s call it that, where Allah *Subhana wu wata’alah* (“praise be to God the most high”) basically instils something in you where you feel you need to emphasise something different in your life for the sake of Allah *subhana wu wata’alah*.”

Here, Riad related an individual’s sense of realising a Muslim subjectivity to be, in part,

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<sup>36</sup> Here, ‘religiosity’ refers to the broadest sense of being religious which includes the numerous aspects of religious beliefs, activity and devotion.

dependent on God's guidance. For him, his sense of being Muslim began to change during high school when he was taught by a man named Mustapha, who told stories of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him). Riad said with excitement that he was mesmerised by the stories because he felt the prophet's experience was relatable. These stories and the resonance he felt stayed with him and foregrounded the *ghidaya* he would later receive. He added that,

“He [Mustapha] helped me to this point in my life where I felt I could take on the responsibility of a family. And now it's way even more easier to become a Muslim because I know I have responsibilities and that's my children and my wife. It's great!”

Riad used the stories, the hadiths and prescription as mediums to negotiate the meaning of being Muslim. He further indicated that his sense of being Muslim was not achieved on his own but shared with and shaped by others, including his wife and children. Thus, rather than individual belief and practice, his Muslim subjectivity manifests within intimate social relations. There is a role generation of husband, father and individual believer. Jameela complimented his formation through her own personal embodiment of wife, mother and believer. For them, their understanding of what constitutes a Muslim is through practice and embodiment of the Prophet's *Sunnah* (practice) and *hadith* (messages). When it comes to how they understand their roles as Muslim parents, both indicated that it was their ordained responsibility and even duty to their God. In other words, being a parent did not fall outside the parameters of being Muslim; if one became a parent, one had to do so per Islamic precepts.

The view of a shared and shaped religious subjectivity with others is common among participants as my conversation with Yaqeen shows when we spoke about his childhood. Yaqeen and I were on his bed with the recorder between us whilst Maryam and Sarah sat in the kitchen. Occasionally Maryam would pop in the room and ask us where the *monit* (monster) was, but otherwise we sat undisturbed. He laid on his side of the bed in pyjamas with his arms folded and I sat facing him with my shoes off and legs crossed. I began the interview by asking about what his religious upbringing was like. He chose to begin with a description of the rules in his home administered by his mother,

“Ya, every *waqtu* (time of prayer) especially in the holidays then Ma used to give us hiding if we didn't make *salaah* or take our time for *salaah* and you know Ma wasn't lazy for a hiding so she gave hiding a lot. She was very strict

because Ma comes out of a home where *Ibaadah* (“obedience to God”) and *taqdeer* (refers to God having the final say with regards to a person’s existence) was a part of their daily lives so we had to just follow on what they taught us. What they were taught got passed on to us. And obviously, that is how it’s entrenched in us so we want to pass that on to our children.”

Yaqeen described his childhood as difficult, especially with his parents who were extremely strict. Islam was presented to him and his siblings in a very particular way, characterised by the instilment of fear of God. His religious upbringing occurred with those most present in his daily life, namely his parents and siblings. He lamented that he did not recall much of what his parents taught him because they favoured physical punishment over a gentler approach.<sup>37</sup> He attributed most of his understanding of what it meant to be Muslim from his grandmother who taught him Islamic studies as a young child, and his *sheikh* (Islamic leader) who taught him a little later on. Yaqeen clarified what being Muslim meant to him in a conversation we had over the phone while I was in the writing stages of this chapter.

Yaqeen called me during his lunchbreak so that I could ask him more about what he believed constituted a Muslim. In a serious and calm voice, he said that first and foremost, a Muslim is God fearing and must believe in the unseen. He added that to be Muslim was to believe in the supremacy of God, the prophet, to always keep in mind that this world (*dunya*) is temporary, and that our actions will determine our Hereafter. I thanked him, we ended our call and I returned to my dissertation.

Sarah and I sat in the spare room on the sleeper couch with muted cartoons on the TV – a spinoff of Peter Pan. Maryam was napping in the main bedroom and we kept the door open to listen for her. I opened the conversation with a question about Sarah’s childhood and what it was like growing up as a Muslim. Compared to Yaqeen, her childhood sounded positively nostalgic, a story she was proud to tell. Sarah described her parents as staunch Muslims. She grew up in a newly developed area past Vanguard Drive and her community was

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<sup>37</sup> Unlike his siblings, Yaqeen found it difficult to learn and lamented his mother’s impatience in teaching him. Instead, he attributed a lot of what he learned about his religion from his maternal grandmother and sheikh. <sup>62</sup> Sarah added that her father became a father figure to many of the young men whose fathers’ were absent and looked up to hers for guidance. The establishment of central mosques in specific neighbourhoods is significant to Cape Town. Especially during Ramadaan, specific mosques are very popular and receive a regular congregation.

predominantly Muslim. Her parents greatly contributed to their community's religious values and practices from her father becoming a stand-in *Imam* (a religious leader who leads prayer specifically) in their local mosque to her mom becoming a *Madrassah* (Muslim school) teacher for all the children nearby. She spent a lot of time with cousins who attended the same Islamic primary school and they spent their afternoons at her grandparents' house for aftercare.

It was surprising that I had no knowledge of these intimate childhood details despite having known Sarah for fifteen years. We paused intermittently to listen for Maryam and shifted up against the wall for more comfort. Most of the interview was centred around a childhood in which Islam was intimately experienced through close social networks of family and extended community. Moreover, Sarah attributed her current sense of what it means to be a Muslim to the stable and positive environment she lived in as a child. Her type of childhood marked by an intimate cluster of Muslim people was common in the Cape Town Muslim population. Life history became a salient theme in Yaqeen and Sarah's understanding of what being a Muslim entailed and together they shared a particular emphasis on *salaah* (prayer). They made sure to pray together whenever they were together, which became part of the foundation of their home.

Yaqeen and Sarah were both forthcoming about their religious upbringing although they reflected on them differently. They seemed to locate the formation of their Muslim identities within early childhood and what was given to them then was carried through until now. In contrast, both Riad and Jameela shied away from discussing their religious upbringing in our discussions. Instead they located their Muslim identities and the formation thereof at a later stage in life. What is evident was that for both couples, what it means to be Muslim is rather similar in sentiment – the God-fearing believer – however in each home their sentiments are emphasised and manifested differently.

I thoroughly enjoyed my conversations with Taskeen and Shahid. They were forthcoming, vibrant, funny and often engaged in light debates. In one of our very early interviews, Shahid took the floor to talk about his childhood, described as strongly religious. With a long puff of his cigarette he began his story. His father was a Christian pastor and Shahid described how, as a child, he did not feel close to his religion or God.<sup>38</sup> He made no attempt to hide his

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<sup>38</sup> Shahid said that in his home and church, his innate curiosity was not met with openness. Instead, he was

unsettlement during Sunday school and often got reprimanded for questioning too much. He moved to Johannesburg when he was nineteen years old and met Taskeen in an unlikely encounter that for them, as he put it, might have been fate.

When I met Taskeen for the very first time, we sat in the lounge with our coffee and chatted briefly about my research. I mentioned my interest in life history and she began telling me about her religious upbringing, or lack thereof. I felt unprepared and wrote frantic notes while she related her experiences. In a rather lamenting tone, she said that as a child her only form of Muslim identity was from her name. Her mother was neither very religious nor taught Taskeen to be religious. When she was older, she moved in with her “staunch” Muslim aunt and uncle who, to her, were contradictory in their religious practices and Islamic etiquette because she experienced emotional abuse in their home. Thus, like Shahid, Taskeen’s religious experiences were ambiguous and antagonising. Only in her early twenties did she reacquaint herself with Islam at the prospect of having a family one day. This familiarity with Islam during adulthood as opposed to being nurtured during childhood is not unusual; sometimes certain conditions of childhood such as growing up in a different faith or having caregivers who do not put a strong emphasis on religion do not foster a sense of religious identity and subjectivity from a young age (Scourfield et. al., 2013).

As a young couple, Shahid and Taskeen were interested in Islam and Shahid clarified that he did not ‘revert’ to Islam for Taskeen, but for himself. Bemused, he said that Christianity put him at 2 on a scale of 1 to 10 in his closeness to God and Islam bumped him up to a 4. One day he decided to recite his *shahadah* (a testament that commits you to God) before an Imam and embraced Islam at the mosque. He did not let Taskeen know about it until afterwards and it is still something that annoys her. The couple described themselves as ‘rather liberal’ in their views of what it means to be Muslim and how to practice Islam. They were adamant that it was the intention and belief of a person that made them Muslim, and not necessarily an expression of a Muslim identity. What mattered was a personal acceptance of the religion and its tenets.<sup>39</sup>

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told that things are just the way they are and that he should not question. As someone who identifies as stubborn and curious, this did not sit well with him and instead, generated an adverse effect in his religiosity.

<sup>39</sup> Although, Shahid jokingly said that you never know, one day he might find himself with a long beard and fez,

I felt as though I knew what being a Muslim meant to Taskeen and Shahid but around the time I called Yaqeen to refresh me on his perspective I texted Taskeen to refresh me on hers. In her lengthy and speedy response, she said that after Shahid ‘reverted’ to Islam they spoke with an Imam whose tone was not judgemental, but rather collaborative, sharing his knowledge with them.<sup>40</sup><sup>41</sup> He mentioned to them that “in Islam, your actions are judged by your intentions” and his words made a profound impact on her. For Taskeen, “being a Muslim means that whatever you do in your everyday life, you do it with the purest intentions and to always try to be better.” For Taskeen, being Muslim was not dependent on, for example how much prayer one completed or how one dressed, but rather one’s intention. According to Taskeen and Shahid, believing in the prescribed ‘oneness’ of God and the last Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.), and having good intentions in everyday life is enough to be called ‘Muslim’.

The meaning of a Muslim and the responsibilities of that person was similarly understood between the caregivers. However, when it came to the lived experience of being Muslim each individual (and together with their partner) emphasised an aspect of Islam important to them – specifically the Prophet (P.B.U.H), *salaah* (prayer) and good intentions. Their respective ideas of how a Muslim should live is born out of various experiences rooted either in childhood or in adulthood and through interpersonal relations.

### *Can a child understand religion?*

One evening around six o'clock I visited Taskeen and Shahid after he returned home from work. Taskeen was already in their garage lounging area and Shahid opened the garage door to let me in. The built-in sitting area was a little dark as usual, the make shift table was crowded with packets of screws, a half-cut two litre bottle filled with sand and nipped cigarette buds and our glasses of water. After we settled in, the couple lit their cigarettes, sank into their chairs and waited for me to start recording. Immediately the conversation

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implying that he might become a staunch Muslim himself.

<sup>40</sup> He also married them.

<sup>41</sup> This judgemental tone Taskeen spoke of was something she and Shahid showed concern about regarding religious leaders. They mentioned that Imams are sometimes not willing to share in their knowledge, but rather take an authoritative position and state what is Islamic fact for Muslims to follow without substantial engagement in what these rules are and the value they hold.

sprang into the technicalities of whether a child understands religion or not.

**Taskeen:** Okay so my opinion is that I think that the child is uhm... basically [the child] answers to mommy and daddy and doesn't answer to God because I feel they can't understand the concept of the bigger picture.

**Shahid:** (interrupted) No but I just feel [that] what their mommy and daddy is implementing God then mommy and daddy becomes a conduit towards religion. Now in my opinion a child doesn't understand religion. Full stop.

**Taskeen:** Yes the child doesn't understand –

**Shahid:** A child understands faith. Very different.

**Taskeen:** But I also don't think children understand faith either because then the children's, their faith is, I mean, if I tell them... “trust me, I'm going to do it for you” they still have reservations.

**Shahid:** Except a child understands: I cry, mommy's going to put a tit in my mouth. (We all giggle.) I have faith that if I cry mommy's going to put a tit in my mouth.

**Taskeen:** Yes, but I feel that children have more faith in what is there, concrete things. They have faith in concrete things, things that they can see, results that they can see. If I do this, this is the consequence, whereas my faith lies in not consequences that I'm going to see now. So if I commit murder and get away with it, I'm not going to see the consequences of my actions now but I know that there will be consequences because I committed a sin. But I don't think that a child can appreciate that sense, that if they do that and they get away with it, I don't think they can appreciate the consequence that there's more out there than just the punishment that your parents are going to give you.

**Shahid:** Ya but that's mos a description of religion so you agree with me

**Yusra:** Well -

**Shahid:** Or is the disagreement with you

**Taskeen:** That the child doesn't understand religion?

**Shahid:** Yes

**Taskeen:** Yes but that's what I said so it is - - it has to come from the parents. We have to implement that religion

**Shahid:** exactly therefore your statement is contradictory. You're saying a child believes in religion because he believes in consequence. However -

**Taskeen:** I said I don't think can believe in religion, I don't think a child can understand religion

**Shahid:** ya but if parents are a conduit of religion then therefore a child can understand religion

**Yusra:** or it could just be that don't understand but they're just going with the motions

**Shahid:** ya but that becomes faith not religion

**Taskeen:** yes and then as they grow older then they see the bigger - - they start seeing the bigger picture.

When Taskeen and Shahid lightly debated about whether a child understands religion and faith, they highlight the purpose of a parent in the child's life as a 'conduit' towards religion. This point was further highlighted by a group of educators at a local Muslim high school with whom I spoke one day.

I approached Abdeah (the principle), Nuriyah and Gadija (the two educators) because they were specialised in Islamic studies and are mothers (of older children; but still mothers). I began by asking questions around parenthood, namely what they as teachers and mothers perceived to be the duty of a parent, and what role parents played in the child's life. Abdeah said,

“Our *deen* (religion) teaches us that we are going to have to answer for the people we are responsible for so I think for me that plays heavily on me as well.<sup>42</sup> we are responsible for these youngsters that I think are also - - it weighs heavily on me that you also mould your child's personality so you can really mess them up. So hectic but *Alhamdulillah* (praise be to Allah). It's not easy, I think for us as people who are trying by the command of Allah, we'd never relax. As parents you don't relax. That's my take on it.”

Thus far, participants described parenthood as something bearing a lot of responsibility. As conduits of religion, caregivers are expected to carry their children through uncertain and unpredictable life worlds, ensuring that their children become practicing Muslim adults.

Taskeen and Shahid invited me over for *boekah* (breaking fast) during Ramadaan and I spent my evening with them continuing our previous discussion. This time the garage was bright with fairy lights and the walls illuminated. I provided them with a brief analysis of the 'ideal' people they envisioned for their children from our previous conversation and said, “you said you want to instil in them principles and all these things and so on and so forth, but then on the other side of that is how. How are you doing that on a day-to-day basis?”

To answer this, Taskeen mentioned an attribute of parenting which I have since realised is thematic amongst all my participants. She said,

“It's difficult - you know I was also giving this some thought. It's difficult to say, I mean we do have ideas of how we want to our kids to end up but really having kids its

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<sup>42</sup> Deen translates to 'religion'. Especially the religious observances of a Muslim.

experimental because there's no parenting guide saying "if you do this your child will end up that way" because you have to take into consideration the environment, the type of child they are, the type of person you are you know, the type of personalities and that. Where they live, where they go to school, the family that are around them. All of that has influences so one person can be doing one thing and they can raise a child that is really religious and follows the rules and another person can do the exact same thing but the child ends up differently because the environment base is different. So it's really difficult."

The terms "experimental" and "trial by error" (mentioned by Yaqeen) applied to raising a child became thematic amongst the caregivers I interviewed. Taskeen's anecdote also implies that the manner in which the child and caregiver's personalities interact within their environment plays a large role in how a child is reared. In other words, the experience of raising a child is largely uncertain and at times requires caregivers to improvise in their parenting methods. This raises the question: if raising a child to be a specific person, that is Muslim, is added to this "experimental" space of child rearing, then what mechanisms are used by caregivers to ensure a specific outcome?

### Tenets in cahoots: the foundations

The notion of a 'foundation' is commonly used by caregivers to convey metaphorical ground on which their children's religious subjectivity is built on. The Islamic foundation constitutes beliefs, practices and values given by parents and stakeholders to the child(ren). It is the way these constituents are brought together and implemented in child-rearing differed amongst families. The function of the foundation is to act as a baseline or point of reference that the child can always rely on throughout their lives. My participants were keen to discuss this and I enjoyed numerous conversations on the topic. Riad in particular, was interested in expressing his views. His input was enjoyable even though I sometimes felt antagonised by his delivery. Once, after dinner, I asked him, "so what are the principles you intend to instil in your children?" Riad answered,

"Basically, you give them *sunnah* (the prophet's practices), you give them *ahadith* (the prophet's messages), and give them *Quraan* (the holy book of Muslims).

That's - look what I was taught is that that's the only way to Jannah. If you don't have those three as your basis then your guide is screwed basically so you need to have

been following the *sunnah* of the Nabi Muhammad *Sallallahu Alayhi Wasalam* (P.B.U.H) implement the *ahadith* and follow the Quraan. So the three of those is in cahoots with one another and if one of those three is missing your path might take you off from the right road. So I intend to give them that and it starts with the little things.”

To implement these three elements of the foundation, Riad added that a parent needs to lead by example. Therefore, live the *Sunnah*, read and be close with the *Quraan* and know *hadith*. Also, to set an example, he has to seek the knowledge he needs to implement.<sup>43</sup> One of the hadiths Riad offered was about parenting and how the child’s religious upbringing has to come in stages. He said that for the first seven years a child had to receive nothing but love without religious obligation. The next seven years constitutes guidance and religious obligation, and, in the last seven years, the parent becomes a companion to their now adult child.<sup>44</sup> Riad intends to implement these guidelines to raise his children and this made me wonder what Jameela’s thoughts were on Riad’s approach.

The sun was not too warm when I sat with Jameela outside. Israr by this point was more awake and I asked Jameela what she thought of Riad’s three-part foundation and the *hadith*. Jameela agreed but in a bemused tone said that it was not that easy. Sometimes she would get so annoyed with her sons and in those moments, it became hard to find a balance between discipline and patience. I asked how else she tried to instil Islamic values and she gave an example illuminating the relationship between (conduit) parent and child that was mutually shaping.

**Jameela:** Like we will always try to be dressed right and if I am getting dressed they need to be out.

**Yusra:** Oh is it?

**Jameela:** They can’t be here. And if [Riad] is getting dressed they have to be out.

**Yusra:** Oh okay for both you. It doesn’t matter

**Jameela:** It doesn’t matter because [Fawaz] already says ‘Daddy your *aurat* (the body parts that are considered private) is open’ if his knees are showing or something. So we try to let them know this is what this is and this is what that is.

Her words made me pay attention to my own comportment. I adjusted my position as she told me about the things they implemented and how. I asked her what role her parents-in-law

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<sup>43</sup> Scourfield et al’s (2013) use of *tarbiyah* speaks directly to Riad’s impetus put on seeking knowledge to give knowledge (refer to literature review).

<sup>44</sup> I talk more at length about the periodization stated by this hadith in the last chapter.

played in the children's lives. She responded;

“I think a lot. Well not really Pa but Ma because Pa will like lock himself up inside but Ma is always around and always doing something Islamic or she'll always say ‘No I'm not going to do that because this what I'm supposed to do’ or ‘Fawaz no wait this is what we're supposed to do’ or ‘Fawaz this is what you're supposed to say’. Because I'm sure when I'm at work she's the one that is teaching him. She or [Tasneem].”<sup>45</sup>

In their home, Riad plays a prominent role in outlining their children's religious foundation and as of recently, became actively involved in realising his goals. As a family, which includes Riad's parents and sister, everyone holds a stake in Fawaz and Israr's futures and create a support network amongst themselves to raise them. This is supported by literature stating; independently and jointly, grandparents and parents may influence the beliefs and practice of the children, a finding echoed in other studies (e.g. Copen & Silverstein, 2007). It is apparent that caregivers understand and approach their roles as parents differently. I explored this further by asking Yaqeen and Sarah how they intended to raise Maryam. We sat in his room because he was tired and wanted to lie down while we conducted our interview.<sup>46</sup> Yaqeen laid mostly watching the TV that live-streamed Makkah (also called Mecca) as he gave his input. My back got a little sore and I scooted up towards the pillow and leaned against it.

**Yusra:** So how do you intend on raising her?

**Yaqeen:** I believe, in my belief what I believe is that if I can give her a good Islamic background from a young age ... Also in our house it was more of discipline and corporal punishment rather than anything else or for us it was if you didn't know it you got a hiding for it. I don't believe in that. I believe you get a hiding if you're naughty.

**Yusra:** I'm looking at her age now and we're trying to I guess, in my thesis thinking about their sense of faith and religion. So what are you trying to do at this specific age to give her that foundation?

**Yaqeen:** Salaah. You can see we make our *waqtus* (time of prayers) together, mommy and what I saw very rarely in our house was ma and pa *salaah* together, and I never wanted that. When we got married I said [that] if we [are] going to make *salaah* we try our best to make *salaah* together at all

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<sup>45</sup> Pa, her father in law is blind due to work related circumstances. He spent time either in the lounge or in his room.

<sup>46</sup> As I have previously mentioned, since Yaqeen was a close blood relative being in his room did not feel strange but normal.

times. So we always try to make *salaah* together and since she started crawling we've taken a small *muslah* (prayer mat) and put it next to us and say, "You must come *salaah*" and when we hear the athaan we must keep quiet so for us that is important. At this age now she already understands when the *waqtu* comes, she knows it's time to *salaah* and I would say to her 'let's go make *Allhuakbar* ("God is great", it is also the words used to commence prayer). And you'll hear her say '*Allhuakbar*' because that's what I'm teaching her. Now she already knows how to go, it's time we must *salaah*, put on your *doekie* (tied headscarf) put on your *burkah* (a headscarf that is slipped on) and for me that is important.<sup>47</sup> But most of all is we *salaah* together. As many *waqtus* as we can we do it as a family and that's important also for them growing up so they get a sense knowing that their lives will be made up and that's part of what life is making *salaah*.

Sarah and Yaqeen both emphasise the importance of respect for elders and *salaah* for Maryam at her current age. Yaqeen focuses predominantly on interpersonal etiquette for Maryam because he believes that younger children, these days, are less respectful to their elders. In both of their childhood homes *salaah* was an important part of their daily lives and enforced by their parents and grandparents. Sarah mentioned that both her and Yaqeen's parents played big roles in Maryam's life.<sup>48</sup> To add, Yaqeen said during another interview that,

I've got to raise these two children taking the world into consideration yet enforcing as much of groundedness so that they don't get lost and caught up in this ugliness of what this world holds".

Here, Yaqeen shows concern for Maryam getting 'lost' in this world by becoming distant or neglectful of practicing Islam. The 'foundation' not only provides the basis on which to build a strong sense of being Muslim, but to ground Maryam in Islam so that even when she independently enters into 'this world' she will not stray from her religion by becoming 'ungrounded'.

### Invitation

When Riad told me about his three-tier guideline on how to raise children from birth until adulthood, from personal knowledge I knew that in the first seven years children are defined

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<sup>47</sup> A *doekie* is a colloquial Afrikaans word for headscarf.

<sup>48</sup> Maryam and I share grandparents and as a child, I remember being very careful of how I spoke to people in front of our grandmother. If I addressed someone as 'you' I would hear my grandmother screaming from wherever she was "you who?! Cat? Dog?!".

by God to have innocent dispositions and exempted from any religious practices until they reach puberty. In light of the Prophet's (P.B.U.H.) *hadith*, a child in their first seven years is meant to receive love only and have no religious obligation. However, caregivers still consider their children's introduction into religious practice important. Thus, the absence of obligation before puberty becomes religious invitation. Once the child reaches puberty, the religious invitation becomes religious obligation and by then, caregivers hope to have an Islamic foundation in place. The cultivation of children's religious dispositions was described as a gradual process that began with caregivers' ideas of what constitutes a good Islamic foundation. The subsequent question became *how do caregivers begin to instil the Islamic foundation?* It is stated that children are fast learners (like sponges) and demonstrate their knowledge by reprimanding their parents for contradicting their teachings. Caregivers mention also that their children have the capacity to understand the significance behind their religious practices, albeit perhaps not the meaning attached by caregivers. The child is perceived as agentive yet malleable, capable yet vulnerable, and each child's personality is considered, attributing to her/his different learning style.

In this section, I consider the early introduction to religious practices as invitation which includes what caregivers proffer to children through simple acts performed by children as part of family rituals or on their behalf. I explore this process by taking the idea of 'invitation' as the core modality through which people brought their children into contact with their religious faith and practices.

Zainab and Zahied were not part of my core families but were willing to do an interview. We sat in their lounge on their white couches. I was next to Zainab and Zahied was adjacent to us, watching soccer in between our conversation. I recall thinking that their home was lovely and spacious, and obviously occupied by children – there were toys trailing from a pink tent in the lounge. They were more or less my age, married, have a daughter together, and two sons from Zainab's previous marriage. Emphasising the importance of an Islamic foundation, Zainab describes how she incorporated Islam from their infancy,

**Zainab:** Like now I'll play it [*thikr*] in the car, I have CD's in the car so sometimes I play it but also like from small like infants, like if I need to make salaah sometimes they just want to be on me so I'll make salaah with them on my arm and they're so used to it that now Safiya, she from a year old already, she would if I make salaah she'll come

stand there and then she does everything I do without me enforcing it. Because children learn what they learn. They learn by imitation and they imitate their parents so she'll stand by me like if I tell her make duah she'll do this with her hands because she watches. And even if she hears the *athaan* (call to prayer) she does this because she's so used to hearing it.

Sarah describes a similar way she extended an invitation to Maryam when it was time to pray. Sarah took *wudhu* (ablution) with the door open and when it was time to pray, laid a mat next to her. Present one evening during Ramadaan we broke our fast together with some savouries, sweet snacks from neighbours and beverages. Before we ate supper, we took *wudhu* and proceeded to the Salaah room for Maghrib. There we laid down the mats and Sarah laid a smaller mat for Maryam next to her father, whilst calling out to Maryam to come made "*allahu-Akbar*" (used here to refer to prayer time). When Maryam came, her mom put a *burkah* [pulled on headscarf] on and we started to pray.

Maryam mimicked our behaviour sometimes, but became fidgety and took her headscarf off. At some point, she looked through her legs and let out a big fart that made her laugh and made me smile, but I had to keep my composure during prayer.

What was important for both caregivers was that practices such as salaah, hearing the *thikr* (short recitations) or the *athaan* (call to prayer) was normalised. According to Quinn (2005: 479) these practices "were habitual and routinely enacted, sometimes more deliberate and strategically employed, thought to most effectively raise a child to be such an adult". The overall perception of the child's chronological and developmental stage has implications for how parents nurture their children's religiosity. Being born Muslim, the invitation marks a significant threshold in children's enactment of their religiosity. The invitation is considered a necessary method of foregrounding and pre-empting children's religious foundation and their religious lives.

### Gendered identities

The religious foundation was not similar for Muslim boys and girls. I noticed that caregivers clearly demarcated their roles as mother and father with respective contributions to their children's upbringing. For example, one day Salma joined Zainab, Zahied and I in the lounge to sit on her mom's lap and play. While discussing how they handle their children and what

they do as a team, Zainab described it as “an unspoken thing” between them – she would make the rules and Zahied would reinforce. Zahied described the mother as “the soft-hearted teacher” who plays the biggest role in her children’s early religious foundation and the father as “the spine”, the embodiment of strength that keeps everything in order. Zahied called himself the *amir* (head of the household) of the house. Their role generation of mother and father is shared by Taskeen and Shahid who discuss the difference in raising girls and a boy;

**Yusra:** and now there's a boy coming into the mix

**Shahid:** different, difficult, new

**Taskeen:** It’s very different. Gakeem and I are very close, he gives me lots of kisses and hugs, he's my little boy, and I love him to bits and he steals my heart but I'm very scared of raising him as a mama’s boy. I don’t want to raise him as that stereotype

**Shahid:** And I'm scared of being too hard on him

**Taskeen:** So that stereotype of me being too soft on him and doing everything for and then he's not going to be a man enough to take of a woman at the end of the day

**Shahid:** It’s very difficult from my side, my girls I spoil them wherever I can, I spoil them. I let them get away with things because they’re my girls but I can’t do the same for him in fact for him I need to be the opposite because I need to make him strong, I need to make him responsible. And I need it to be a part of him

**Taskeen:** You see now with us being as liberal as we are we are also still conventional where roles are concerned. The man must be the man of the house and he must treat his woman like a queen. So he will always tell the girls ‘I treat you like princesses because so that one day when you get a husband, you’ll get someone who will treat you even better than what I treat you’ and in that same respect I want to raise Hakeem in that same sense that ‘do you see how your father protects me, and provides for me and does things for me? I want you to be able to do the same for your wife.’  
That is what sits at the back of my mind all the time that I'm raising someone else’s husband. He needs to be a husband and he needs to provide for his family.

What is salient in these two examples is that the designated role of mother and father is rooted in the demarcation between masculinity and femininity and the assigned roles each gender must play. Zainab and Zahied envisage their roles as mother and father within an Islamic context wherein men and women embody their religiosity differently. Al-Asi (2012) similarly mentions that raising Muslim girls and boys is the conceptual meeting of masculine and feminine souls. Here, the mother is aligned with nurturance and softness, something that all children equally

need in their infancy and toddlerhood.<sup>49</sup> However, as Taskeen mentions, the boys cannot stay within the softness of their mothers and instead have to migrate to the care of their fathers. It is under their father's care where boys learn what it means to be a man and the responsibilities they will have when they are older and become someone else's husband.

The gendered separation between boys and girls is not only situated in children's relationships with each parent, but also in parents' expectations of how their children will carry themselves when they are older. Sarah and Yaqeen agreed that raising a girl is different to raising a boy. Sarah said she would like her daughters to be "caring, more soft, more nurturing" and Yaqeen added that he felt these qualities are engraved in a woman's DNA. Sarah mentioned however, that despite raising boys and girls differently, she does not believe that girls should be isolated to the domestic private space, but that as kind and caring as she hopes Maryam to be she must also be strong and stand her ground.

Therefore, the role gender plays in these children's lives is rooted in the emphasis parents put on roles of women and men in Islam. In some cases, these gendered ideas are patriarchal in that men embody leadership and women embody nurturance. The implication is that an absence of either mother and father would result in an uneven realisation of what it means to be a man or a woman. Jameela particularly emphasised that she could only raise her boys in a particular way, but as future men they need their father to be the masculine role model. Therefore, for these children, the aim of parents is not just a general Islamic foundation but one that is also tied to generating Muslim men and women and the expectations of each in terms of Islamic understandings.

### Conclusion

In this chapter I look at what it means to raise a Muslim child and how caregivers try to ensure an Islamic foundation. The way caregivers understand what it means to be a Muslim and how to practice Islam has implications for how they raise their children. Some caregivers situate the consolidation of their Muslim subjectivity from early childhood to early adulthood.

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<sup>49</sup> In Islam Heaven lies at the feet of a mother. This is based on a hadith from the prophet regarding the value of parents in people's lives. See more details here, <https://muslimvillage.com/2015/09/09/10093/paradise-at-the-feet-of-your-mother/>

Interpersonal relationships with parents, friends, siblings, teachers, grandparents and more, shape and share in what being a Muslim means to caregivers. When it comes to raising children, caregivers' histories, beliefs and practices constitute the mechanisms caregivers use to ensure that their children share the same religion.

The Islamic foundation is meant to 'ground' the child in Islam now and for the rest of their lives. Caregivers draw on different approaches towards laying the Islamic foundation such as normalising and including the child in religious practices, leading by example and following certain guidelines, such as the *hadith* on how to raise Muslim children. Leading by example is used specifically for Islamic etiquette or '*adab* (self conduct) which is mentioned by Jameela who shapes her children's understanding of privacy and by Yaqeen who addresses people they way he wants Maryam to. Normalising practices on the other hand, is achieved through the notion of an invitation. Caregivers invite children to join them in religious practice by using verbal cues like 'let us go make *allahu-Akbar*' or giving the child religious paraphernalia such as prayer mats. The purpose of this chapter is to show the ideas and practices involved in constituting a child's early Islamic foundation. The next chapter will show that the foundation does not only constitute certain regulations and practices aligned with Islam. Part of teaching and inviting the child to participate in Islam is to nurture their emotions so that their Islamic foundation will last them a lifetime.

## ***Chapter 5: The Feels***

## Instilling a Feeling

My mother's sentiment regarding the upbringing of a younger generation of Muslims, with which I opened the previous chapter, was spurred on by a lecture on iTV given by Numan Ali Khan, an Islamic scholar, who spoke about the lack of emotion involved in raising children today.<sup>50</sup> For Khan, Islam ought not to be passed down simply as practices and precepts, but done through an emotive interaction between the caregiver, the child and the religion.

Apparently, in both his version and my mother's, the missing factor in today's generation of young Muslims is the lack of emotional connection with God and Islam - fault is situated with the caregivers. Alie's lecture concluded that if children's emotions are nurtured to love, appreciate and fear God from a young age, then they would be more religious. In the previous chapter, I focus on the aspects of Islam caregivers emphasise in daily life and the ways in which these aspects shape their children's religious upbringing by proffering an invitation to a spiritual life and practice. I now turn to the question of emotional disposition as raised by my mother, Numan Alie, and my participants. This deliberates how caregivers attempt to mediate and foster emotional experiences and expressions of their children to elicit particular feelings towards Islam. I begin with a story that exposed me to thinking about affect in formations of faith.

The second time I visited Amina I met her sister-in-law, Ilhaam. Amina is married with five children, the youngest of whom are aged three years and eight months. Amina and Ilhaam are married to brothers and both families live together. Amina stood in the front doorway to welcome me as I walked briskly through the rain to meet her. She is petite, bright blue-eyed and an energetic speaker. Three of her children were huddled on the lounge carpet, watching the Disney channel and sniffing with the cold.

She led me to the kitchen where Ilhaam sat at the table. I noticed the spread of mini flapjacks, strawberries, cream and coffee. She told me to sit and explained that the spread was their Thursday morning routine. Despite living together, they did not see each other often and reserved Thursday mornings for breakfast together – it was my lucky day. I slid into the booth and helped myself to delicious breakfast while Amina sat opposite me and Ilhaam

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<sup>50</sup> iTV is an Islamic channel on DSTV.

beside me. I took my phone to record and we started the conversation.

Similar to other interviews, I began with questions about their childhoods and their recollections of the people, things and activities that influenced their religiosity. Amina spoke excitedly about Islam, her eyes vibrant as she described her immense passion for Islam. Ilhaam on the other hand, provided timid responses and only contributed when she had something to add. The baby, with cute, fat cheeks, was on a high stool next to Amina and sat watching us with a strawberry in hand.

The conversation covered numerous topics around the presence of Islam in their homes. They recalled Qur'anic recitations on the radio and how they closely observed their parents' religiosity - in dress, mannerisms and interactions with others. They recalled specific traditions they participated in that were particular to Cape Town and how as children, their association with Islam was positive. I often related to some of the things they mentioned, especially the traditions that were unique to Cape Town which I observed and participated in as a child too.

Amina described how, as a child, she recalled seeing her father display so much love for the Quran that she described it as a "romance". I strongly related to her memories because my father, from time to time, sits in front of his fish tank and beautifully recites some verses from the Quraan. Ilhaam agreed to similar observations and added that as young as they are, her children already loved God. She continued to say that the rhymes and songs they learn about God in preschool foster their love for him and Islam. The conversation was taking a lovely turn towards an aspect of religious parenting that I had not considered until Ilhaam said, "I think you need to instil a feeling into them".<sup>51</sup> The conversation went from their cheerful nostalgia and their positive associations of the religion as children to their plans for instilling similar feelings into their children.

In her book, *Politics of Piety*, Saba Mahmood (2005: xi) states that her main focus is to look at the ways practices perform work in the "making of the subject" that create "life worlds, attachments and embodied capacities". She does not attempt to model or construct the subject through her ethnography but considers the subject as a site of critique and uses ethnography as a critical tool for understanding how subjects are rendered. Therefore, the performances

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<sup>51</sup> In the Quran, when God is referred to in the pronoun, it is masculine.

and articulations of subjectivity are important, since being Muslim in her book, is constituted by interweaving realms of history, culture, agency, postcoloniality and more that are at no point static. In a more local way, my research does not set out to construct the ‘Muslim subject’ but demonstrates how children’s sense of Muslim subjectivity is cultivated by caregivers who envisage a particular pious disposition. Here, this hopeful and envisaged Muslim subjectivity of the child is foregrounded by cultivating children’s emotions, which I introduce next as ‘instilling a feeling’.

The notion of instilling a feeling means that raising a child as Muslim is more than educating them and inviting them to participate in Islamic practice and ideology. It is about nurturing the emotions that are considered to shape us in many ways – our emotional experiences, expressions and related behaviours (Cole, Tamang & Shrestha, 2006). For example, caregivers would elicit positive emotions in the child or regulate negative emotions, such as anger, if the situation deemed it inappropriate.<sup>52</sup> The process of “instilling a feeling” (as described by Ilhaam) is aimed at making children’s religious practice and ideology meaningful to them in childhood and adulthood. It is as though their emotion is the glue that holds their beliefs and practices together. The question of dispositions initiated by Ilhaam arose frequently in my research. Take for example, an encounter I had with Shahid, Taskeen and their son Hakeem.

It was summer, Shahid looked youthful with his shaven beard and Taskeen was up and about, in recovery after her operation. The open back door brightened up the lounging space in the garage and let a lukewarm breeze pass through. Hakeem, their youngest, was playing outside with his two sisters and pretend sword fighting with sticks. Once we settled into our respective chairs, I brought up my interest in emotions and asked what they made of the relation between nurturing emotion and nurturing religiosity in their children. Taskeen, in an endearing tone, said that Hakeem has a wonderful disposition – always happy, playful, quiet and very kind. However, he gets frustrated quickly and hits his sisters to vent his frustrations. With perfect timing, Hakeem began screaming outside and Taskeen got up to check what the problem was after his screams did not subside. Once she returned, I asked them how they made sense of Hakeem’s temperament. Shahid said that Hakeem’s temperament is intrinsic to him and even suggested there is a correlation between his wife’s disposition during

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<sup>52</sup> For example, feeling positive emotions during Ramadaan or suppressing anger towards others.

pregnancy and Hakeem's personality.<sup>53</sup> Shahid related his opinion to a statement made previously after their debate regarding children's faith (described in chapter four),

Yes, it's to do with character and character in my opinion is what is built in that first three years, that's where the basis of your character comes from. You can change because you meet people along the way but the basis of your character is probably from minus 9, from that inception, all the way through to birth, or at least all the way through to three."<sup>54</sup>

Shahid's statement illustrates a materialistic perspective of emotion by situating Hakeem's personality and temperament before birth (Lutz and White, 1986). Here, my use of "materialistic" does not subscribe to any theory of materialism (such as Marx, for example), but simply used to refer to the physical - in this case, the physical processes within the body. To Shahid, God instils emotions in people, and maternal characteristics and dispositions during pregnancy shape the infant's personality and emotional experiences. Shahid's perspective is consistent with Ilhaam's earlier opinion that children already love God and that they just need the guidance to nurture that love. Even more interestingly, I was told that God creates us out of love which means that a love for God is intrinsic to us. The implication here is that there is a nascent feeling towards God, as people say, "seated in the hearts of children", that needs the touch of a caregiver to give it life.<sup>55</sup>

I witnessed this in operation in everyday acts of care. For instance, I sat one late afternoon in the lounge with Maryam scrolling through my Instagram looking at 'momos' (animals). Sarah announced from the kitchen "daddy is here Maryam" and as Maryam ran to the kitchen she met her father in the kitchen doorway. He picked her up, kissed and cuddled her whilst she laughed and squirmed in his arms. In a conversation that took place on a different day, Yaqeen, Sarah, their neighbour aunty Shaheedah and I sat in the lounge to discuss emotions in raising Muslims. Yaqeen was half asleep on the couch whilst Sarah stood and Aunty

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<sup>53</sup> Shahid mentioned that they were going through some difficulties with their middle daughter. He said that Taskeen was especially anxious during her pregnancy. Now, their daughter is an anxious person who worries about her father a lot when he travels for work. Zainab and Zahied described a similar scenario when Zainab had been particularly stressed with the one child during pregnancy and believed that it had produced a restless disposition in their son.

<sup>54</sup> Shahid's statement can be related to the opening excerpt that describes the process of a foetus that receives a soul.

<sup>55</sup> When I refer to feeling in this context, I am not referring to labelled emotions such as love, for example, but rather to a medley of feelings reserved for belief.

Shaheedah sat beside me. Before he fell asleep, Yaqeen said,

“Emotion is the understanding of a feeling. It is when I display affection and love for her, when I tell her I love her and hug her she understands that emotion to be of caring and feeling that she needs to develop for me *per se*. Not just for me but for her mommy too.... I show her constant affection and love so that she can understand what it’s about so that she knows when to say “I love you” and what context to use it in.

That’s the most important part of emotions, to understand which emotion to use when. She must understand that that emotion of regret for what she's done [when she does ‘wrong’], there's a consequence to that. And that’s what at this impressionable age I'm trying to instil in her so that she knows what emotions to display and when and what feelings are attached to that. And the most important emotion and feeling that I want her to carry with her - and this she must carry until the day I close my eyes – is the feeling of not to disappoint me. And what associated feelings are with that and emotions is attached to that in the unlikely event or likely event that she disappoints me to the extent whereby she’ll know my disappointment. So that’s what she needs to grow up with, that’s what I need to instil in her from this age is to understand what emotions and feelings are about. What is love, why do we hug each other, why do I scold her? “

Later he added,

“It’s our duty as parents to pass that onto your children so that they can understand what emotions to display when, how to feel, what to do, how to go about understanding which emotion to display when and at which particular time to display that emotion.”

Here Yaqeen illustrates what social science literature would describe as an interpretivist and social approach to emotions. He states earlier that he did not know where emotions come from, but here he refers to Maryam’s experiences of her emotions as validated by his or another caregiver’s reaction (Lutz & White, 1986). In other words, while Maryam discovers new emotions, it is her parents’ responsibility to recognise those emotions and teach her about them by being frames of reference for her feelings, and consequent actions, as well as by naming them. He intends to lead by example so that Maryam can observe, learn and mimic, and by actively intervening in her behavioural responses to certain situations. Most importantly, love is considered the primary emotion to teach and show Maryam at her age.<sup>56</sup> That she associates him coming home with hugs, kisses and laughter – but most of all love –

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<sup>56</sup> Yaqeen’s impetus on love as the primary emotion to foster in Maryam correlates with the hadith that Riad drew on to raise his children.

is indicative to him of his success in this work.

Thus far, emotions have been situated by my informants as innate and even God-given. Furthermore, caregivers argue that they are meant to shape the ways in which children feel – what to feel, when, how and why. To illustrate, I turn now to look at the empathy and the ways that caregivers began cultivating this emotion in the context of *Ramadaan* – the holiest month in the Islamic calendar. The aim is to demonstrate how religion and emotions converge in the caregiver-child relationship. Specifically, how caregivers have purposefully tried to elicit emotional arousal from religious activities and events. Lastly, I wish to demonstrate how caregivers’ efforts could be translated as predispositional (Quinn, 2005) exercises in shaping the emotional attachment children have with their religion.

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*“The objective of Ramadaan is to make you conscious of the world and what people that are less fortunate have to experience on a daily basis” – Yaqeen.*

There are five pillars of Islam. These are, to believe in the oneness of God and the last prophet Muhammad (PBUH), to fast in the month of *Ramadaan*, to pray five times a day, to go on *haji* (holy pilgrimage) (if you can afford it) and give charity. I was taught this as a child and told that if you fulfil all five pillars then that is enough to live as a Muslim. To fast in the month of *Ramadaan* is an obligation for every Muslim person at puberty, although some start well before that. I started fasting at six years old, first with half day and then with full days. At the time, my family and I lived in Zeekoevlei and I remember how half an hour before the *athaan* sounded for *maghrib* (sunset prayer) I would go to a few neighbours to share the desserts or savouries we made *boekah* (breaking fast). *Ramadaan* does not refer to the abstinence of food and drink only. It is a time when Muslims are meant to be more conservative, show extra kindness to others and practice patience. It is a month of dedicating more time to reciting the *Quran* and doing extra prayer. *Ramadaan* is the holiest month because God is closer and *Shaytaan* (the devil) is locked away unable to interfere with people. During *Ramadaan* good deeds are rewarded extra and on *Laila-tulQadr* (“The night of Power”), a Muslim has the opportunity to ask God for forgiveness and have all their sins

forgiven.<sup>57</sup>

During the month of *Ramadaan*, the atmosphere is characterised by a sense of peace, calm and quiet. In my own experience, my home is quieter in the day and the evening filled with Quranic recitation or Islamic programmes. My activities take on a slower pace; sometimes due to lethargy but mostly due to more time in the day because I do not eat. The smells of food are more alluring, my thirst more profound accompanied by a grumbling stomach. My energy levels decrease as the day passes and by the time I get home, I slump onto my bed and take a nap until *Maghrib*.

I visited Sarah and Yaqeen during *Ramadaan* to break my fast with them and continue our discussions. Sarah was warming oil on the stove to fry *samoosas* (a triangular-shaped savoury with stuffing and prepared via deep fry) and Maryam was playing around the house with her plastic toys. Once Yaqeen settled in, Sarah gave him and Maryam a plate of *samoosas* and off they went to give these to their neighbours – opposite and next door. They returned home just before the *athaan* went off and we sat around the small table, big enough for three with our bowls of soup. Sarah let Maryam choose her own snacks from the plate - she allows it because it lets Maryam know that the occasion (breaking fast) is special. After *boekah*, we prayed, ate supper and sat in the lounge to start our interview. Maryam sat with her crayons on the floor and drew in a hardcover book.

Yaqeen and Sarah described this *Ramadaan* as different because Maryam was older (two years old) and Sarah argued that while we might not think Maryam understands, “in her own way she does know something is different during this month, because she is a child of routine”. Yaqeen mentioned that he was able to live-stream Makkah on TV and that Maryam knew who the *imam* was [which prompted Maryam to shout “Imam” and then continue drawing], and she would tell him to keep quiet while they listened to the *Imam* recite. Sarah mentioned that during *Ramadaan* she tells Maryam not to offer food to other children because they might be fasting. Generally, Maryam is encouraged to share but during this month she is alerted to people and children fasting which means that she had to show consideration by not sharing her food.

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<sup>57</sup> Laila-tul-qadr translates to ‘night of power’. A special night that falls on one odd day during the last 10 days of *Ramadaan*.

Sarah's voice began to break. I anticipated some tears but she brushed it off and blamed it on her pregnancy. We laughed a little and I encouraged her to cry – “if you must cry, you must cry”. Sarah continued to talk about the children on the streets who do not have a roof over their heads. As she wiped her tears she said that Maryam needed to know of these children's conditions and appreciate the roof over her head. To Sarah, the month of Ramadan is an opportunity for them to teach Maryam how to be appreciative of what she has and to be sympathetic to those who are less fortunate than her. Sarah also mentioned that,

So I think for me it's just special because I know I'm teaching her something that next year she will understand better. So you're basically sowing now and you probably don't think that you're reaping it right now but I know next year she might try and teach her baby sister, she will maybe try and pass on what she knows to her and that's what I think is something good that will come out of this Ramadan for both me and her because I can see she's grasping and she can teach the next person whether it's older or younger.

The larger goal of *Ramadaan* for Sarah and Yaqeen is to shape Maryam's emotional responses to certain activities that are aimed to foreground empathy.<sup>58</sup> However, empathy could not be instilled by telling Maryam to be considerate of others. Instead, Maryam needed to experience particular feelings or observe others' reactions so that she could learn them for herself. Here, Maryam's emotions are cultivated towards a specific emotional disposition her parents associate with being Muslim.

Quinn (2005) an anthropologist, attempts to reconcile materialist and interpretivist views of child-rearing by providing four universal modalities that she uses to make sense of how caregivers tried to shape their children's emotions.<sup>59</sup> The aim of her paper was to delineate “what it is about child rearing that makes it such a crucible for the formation of adult personality” (Quinn, 2005: 478). These four modalities included value practices that are consistently incorporated in the child's daily life so that they can learn important lessons of what is valued. Secondly, these practices are made emotionally arousing for the child by eliciting either positive or negative responses. Thirdly, the lessons a child is meant to learn

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<sup>58</sup> During *Ramadaan*, one is meant to adjust one's emotional disposition towards empathy and emotions related to a spiritual experience. Therefore, patience with others, kindness, abstinence; these are emotive dispositions that are emphasised during *Ramadaan*.

<sup>59</sup> For Quinn, the child's brain is responsive to social encounters that elicit synaptic firing that in turn shapes the child's experiences. Here, she was able to account for 'cultural' socialisation in terms of the brain's reactions as well as account for the variance of people's responses, practices and also values.

are regulated by what is approved or disapproved. Fourthly, the early training of the child is done by predispositional priming, “one that primes the child for lessons to follow about the kind of adult she or he is expected to become” (Quinn, 2005: 482). In the context of my own research, Quinn’s modalities, specifically “emotional arousal” and “predispositional priming”, are used as heuristic devices for making sense of how caregivers cultivate religious and related emotional dispositions in early childhood. Quinn’s inquiry includes children’s envisaged futures which is what caregiver’s base their impetus for an Islamic foundation on.

Sarah and Yaqeen try to make the religious or traditional activities Maryam is involved in elicit positive responses. When Sarah allows Maryam to choose her own snack off the plate; when Yaqeen invites Maryam to watch Makkah with him; and when they took food to the neighbours - these activities associate the unique activities of Ramadaan with positive emotions in Maryam. As Sarah mentions, at Maryam’s age, the point is to sow the relations between particular activities and targeted emotions so that these foreground more complex emotions such as gratitude or empathy towards others. Here Yaqeen and Sarah’s incorporation of practices is part of engineering Maryam’s emotional experiences that prime her for a particular emotional disposition. Currently, empathy as a complex emotion is too difficult to inculcate and perhaps requires more language-dependent lessons (Quinn, 2005). Therefore, Sarah and Yaqeen foreground empathy with what Quinn (2005: 482) refers to as “visceral” experiences of emotions that are based on “emotional arousal”.

I frame ‘Instilling a ‘feeling’ as emotions that are reserved for belief. These emotions are mixtures of both ‘positive’ (love, gratitude) and ‘negative’ (fear, shame) feelings that in some way cement children’s piety. For caregivers, it is their responsibility to help the child recognise and mediate their emotional experiences through their caregivers’ approval or disapproval. To achieve the cultivation of an emotional disposition that foregrounds a disposition of piety, caregivers are expected to mediate their children’s ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ emotions related to Islam. For now, it seemed that negative emotions such as fear or shame are less emphasised during these early years. Instead, caregivers felt it was important to begin with positive associations between the child and religious events, practices or beliefs.

‘Instilling a feeling’ then constitutes the experience of Ramadaan and particularly the emotion of empathy as meant to shape a Muslim’s conduct during the month. One could

consider *Ramadaan* to be a temporal opportunity for “predispositional priming” (Quinn, 2005: 502) that is premised on the value of empathy. The predispositional priming is a moderating process that breaks down the process of instilling a feeling by first, preparing the child with certain associations that generate specific feelings (Quinn, 2005). In Maryam’s experience her feelings of empathy towards others is foregrounded with positive feelings towards *Ramadaan* itself and the experience of giving or being considerate for those who are fasting. As Maryam grows older, her parents intend to continue nurturing Maryam’s feelings associated with *Ramadaan* but her “lessons” (as Quinn notes) will become more complex and include more balanced cultivations of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ emotions.

The centrality of the holy month of *Ramadaan* in cultivating infant dispositions is stressed by all the participants. I visited Taskeen and Shahid one evening during *Ramadaan* for *boekah* (breaking fast). I got there an hour before *maghrib* (sunset prayer time that marks the end of the fasting day) and joined them in the kitchen with Taskeen’s sister in the corner booth. Shahid was making pizzas and Taskeen was finishing the rest of her stir-fry. The children were playing around the house and I stood in the kitchen and watched Taskeen cook. When it was *boekah* time the table was filled with food, pizza, pitas, samosas and more. The younger children had a separate table next to the big table and ate on their plastic plates. Taskeen and Shahid teased their oldest Lailah and her cousin and they got into all humorous banter. Once we ate Taskeen, Shahid and I went to the garage, sat down and settled in to begin our “*Ramadaan* edition” interview.

In our conversation Taskeen spoke more about Hakeem’s personality and how she would read his behaviour, reactions and expressions to see what emotions he understood. She mentioned how whenever Hakeem became frustrated with his sisters and hit them, they would send him to his room until he calmed down. She described how, once, when they sent Hakeem to his room after bad behaviour, a little while later he approached her to say sorry and gave her a hug and a kiss. Taskeen reiterated that in the first three years, Hakeem’s emotions had to be guided, otherwise he would ‘pick up’ bad habits such as throwing tantrums if he became angry and frustrated.

The month of *Ramadaan* presented a specific time for Taskeen to engage with her own religiosity as well as her children’s. She said that during the month of *Ramadaan* she tried to pray more often, develop religious programmes for her children during home school and

made sure that every night her family cooked and ate together. When I asked what this month meant to her and her children she said that it was important for them to appreciate what they have and learn how to be cognisant of other people's condition who are less fortunate.

Therefore, during *Ramadaan* Taskeen and Shahid put a lot of emphasis on charity and together with their children, tried to involve themselves in projects that donate food during that month. The Cape Town Muslim community generally ban together in charitable organisations and events during *Ramadaan* to honour the month's sacrosanct.

Their emphasis on empathy is similar to how Sarah and Yaqeen express it in that they want their children to feel a sense of gratitude for their homes, family and belongings and learn how to share with others who do not have. Furthermore, both couples state that *Ramadaan* is a time to bond with family by spending more time together doing certain activities like cooking or praying together. There were however, differences in how the couples approach the early associations they sought to make for their children. While Sarah and Yaqeen focus on making positive associations with *Ramadaan* for Maryam, Taskeen and Shahid opted to focus on charity as an associated practice with *Ramadaan*.

Taskeen said that during Christmas time, their children received a lot of gifts from family members. During *Ramadaan*, Taskeen asks them all to bring the toy they play with the least and the toy they play with the most to her. She then asks them to give those toys away as charity for other children. I asked her what the point was of giving those toys away and she said that it taught her children a specific understanding of charity. Firstly, to give away the least favourite toy teaches them not to be wasteful. Secondly, giving away the most favourite toy teaches her children that a toy that is good enough for them is good enough for a child who does not have. The point for her is that to teach her children not to be selfish and understand an interpersonal ethic of equality. In other words, they must be willing to give something away that brings them joy so that another person can receive joy from it too. Hakeem, apparently, "did not kick up much of a fuss" about this practice and she hoped that in future, this charitable practice would become easy for them and remain part of their *Ramadaan* experience. It is also meant to foreground empathy as an emotional disposition towards those less fortunate. However, in terms of emotional responses, Taskeen and Shahid chose to tackle both negative and positive arousals in their children. Through their charitable exercise Taskeen and Shahid's children had to contend with feelings of resistance, anger or

even sadness when they had to give their toys away. Albeit, to also find joy in giving their toy away so that someone else could be happy. Their approach is different to Yaqeen and Sarah yet in both cases, caregivers prepared their children for understanding empathy with early lessons and associations.

As I have shown, the way caregivers understand empathy as a complex emotion together with their perception of their children's capacity to understand such an emotion shapes what and how associations and practices are deployed. The perceptions of emotions above might illuminate the literary interests in emotions for those interested in the relationship between feelings and religion. Accounts of emotions in terms of origins, socialised responses and reactions, and lastly the identification of emotions have been largely discussed through psychological theory and more recently by religious studies and anthropology. Fuller (2007: 26) mentions that identifying emotions is a difficult task since these are "among the most slippery and variable human attributes". In psychology, there is a persistent theory founded on the correlation between basic emotions, such as anger, happiness, fear and disgust, and facial expressions. The idea is that 'basic emotions' are 'natural kinds' of emotions and universally shared by everyone despite 'cultural' differences (Izard, 2007).

As mentioned above, Shahid demonstrates a materialistic view of emotions that situates them a priori when he mentions, to him, God instilled emotions in us during pregnancy. However, unlike the materialistic (physical) view that locates emotions within bodily substrates and reactions, Shahid adds a dimension of God to be the provider of these substrates.<sup>60</sup> In light of religion, both Ilhaam and Shahid mentions that God created us out of love which means that not only are emotions created a priori, but God also predisposes emotions to be believe in God. However, even if God predisposes emotions for belief, caregivers are still responsible for cultivating the child's emotions towards a pious disposition. To achieve a disposition of piety, caregivers shape their children's emotional responses through mechanisms such as leading by example, eliciting certain feelings or intervening in undesired emotional responses. Caregivers consider themselves to be the frames of reference for their children to learn from so that these children can learn how to regulate their emotions. Here, the social and environmental context of the child is the predominant force in how that child will come

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<sup>60</sup> Substrates are localised specifically to the brain and bodily reactions such as sweaty palms or racing hearts in particular situations

to feel in general and about Islam. Evident here is a triangulation between God, the caregiver and the child. God provides the predisposed emotions and the parents are the conduits through which children's emotional dispositions are cultivated towards Islamic piety.

Freud's view that fear is the principal factor that motivates theistic belief is often cited as an important approach to the study of religious affect (see, for example, Fuller 2007). In this view, religious belief is underpinned by psychological processes alone. Schleiermacher (1799) and Otto (1923) are also mentioned as prominent theorists that frame emotional propensities to God as "subjective responses to life that have pronounced emotional elements" (Fuller, 2007: 26). The relations drawn historically between emotions and religion, specifically in psychology, reduces emotions to mechanisms through which religious institutions gain control of people. For the research participants, however, the role emotions play in raising children to believe in God is a cohesive element of sowing practice and values into belief. Here, emotions are also mechanisms, not for control but for nurturing and cultivating pious dispositions. Emotional arousal and predispositional priming emerge as tools that caregivers use to cultivate emotional dispositions required for their children's envisaged futures as pious Muslims.

In summation, the caregivers consider God to be the creator of emotions and who instils a dormant 'feeling' reserved for belief. Caregivers situate themselves as frames of emotional reference for their children to recognise and regulate their own emotional experiences. All caregivers note that their children's personalities are dispositions that shape their emotional experiences such as Hakeem who angered quickly. Here, the "character" crafted during pregnancy that Shahid mentions, shapes children's experiences of particular emotions. Therefore, the cultivation of emotional dispositions associated with piety take certain things into account: Firstly, that God instilled feelings in us – those we enact and (according to biological views) universally share, and dormant feelings reserved for belief in God that require caregivers to ignite by nurturance. Secondly, every person's character is considered to be God-ordained dispositions that shape how we deal with or experience specific emotions. Thirdly, a child's perceived capacity to understand emotions and also their caregivers' interventions shape how caregivers approach early "priming" of their children's emotions. Fourthly, given the capacity of the child, any complex emotion such as empathy must be foregrounded by emotionally arousing experiences made through associations and practices.

Lastly, instilling a feeling is not localised to childhood (such as caregivers who locate their Muslim ontologies in adulthood) but is understood as a process that begins during childhood. Caregivers who are currently nurturing certain feelings in their children consider it a long process that needs continuous attention. Caregivers hope that their children will grow older with particular emotional dispositions which, it is believed, would serve to underpin the child's devotion to Islam.

## ***Chapter 6: It Takes Time***

## Was. Is. Could Be: Perspectives on Temporality

The principal's office was a little dark and tucked to the side of the reception area. I sat and waited with Nuriyah and Gadija for Abdeah, the principal, to join us. I found Abdeah striking; she was tall, slender, dark of complexion and had an assertive presence. The two teachers and I sat in front of Abdeah's desk like three students waiting to hear of their punishment. I interviewed these ladies because I was interested in the sources they drew on to talk about our religion and their parenting. Our conversation started with the teachers' experiences of being parents and led into the purpose of a parent in a child's life according to Islam. Here, the relationship between a parent and their child was given value through the Islamic understanding of accountability, specifically in life after death. Abdeah said,

“Our *deen* (religion) teaches us that we are going to have to answer for the people we are responsible for so I think for me that plays heavily on me as well, that we are responsible for these youngsters that I think are also - - it weighs heavily on me that you ... mould your child's personality so you can really mess them up. So hectic but *Alhamdulillah* (praise be to God). It's not easy, I think for us as people who are trying by the command of Allah, we'd never relax. As parents you don't relax. That's my take on it.”

Abdeah's statement concerns accountability framed in terms of a Muslim ontology understood through the passage of time. In Islam, the way one conducts oneself on earth will determine one's life in the Hereafter, marked by an eternity in Heaven (depicted as a garden of paradise and pleasure) or Hell (depicted by fire and pain) (Rustomji, 2012). Heaven and Hell are considered separate spaces within the Hereafter, but are conceptually similar to the Hereafter. We could consider Heaven and Hell as realms that are reserved for people who have conducted themselves either in good or bad ways. Whether a person will reside in either realm, is believed to be determined on Judgement Day when all people will come to face with God. Therefore, the Hereafter is paramount to a Muslim's life and is understood as the continuation of time on earth into life after death as well as the incentive for being Muslim.

Here, Abdeah's relationship with her children constitutes part of her life on earth and imbues her role as a parent with deep religious value. Abdeah considers that her Hereafter is partly dependent on how she carries out her role as a parent. Additionally, by ensuring her children are raised as believing and practicing Muslims she concurrently ensures the continuation of Islam. Abdeah's concerns about the Hereafter are important in the thoughts of many of the

respondents, all of whom, like Abdeah, envisage their parenting roles as critical in forming the ‘yet-to-come’.

During our first interview in the garage, participants and research were still new to me and Taskeen and Shahid had debated whether a child understood faith or not. Thereafter Taskeen told me why religion is so important to her and her children. With waving hand gestures, she said that, “religion is how you affect yourself and the things you do is purely to do with your relationship with the God and the Hereafter.” Like Abdeah’s concern above, accountability for time spent on earth is what gives caregivers the incentive to raise their children as Muslim. Abdeah added an analogy to her description of a parent’s duty and purpose in a child’s life, saying that “Once you have tied your camel, the rest you leave up to Allah because there is only so much a parent can do to ensure an Islamic foundation.” Abdeah’s role in her children’s religious upbringing weighed “heavily” on her because she felt strongly that her children’s “outcome” as practicing Muslims is dependent on her actions as a parent. As a parent her duty is to cultivate a Muslim subjectivity that would ground her children in a trajectory to God. To her, a parent could even play a detrimental role in their children’s lives and “mess them up”. Abdeah’s analogy implies that parenthood does not last forever and that there is only a certain period of time a parent has to ensure Islamic continuity through child-rearing and their children’s futures.

When Riad and I had our first interview he was adamant that he would conduct himself as a Muslim who submits his will to God completely and it is a matter of putting God before anyone else, even children. I asked Riad what he would do if his children ever decided to have a different religion once they were older. Surprisingly, he said that he could not concern himself with his children’s path past a certain point because parents are only given a certain amount of time with their children before they lead their own lives and travel their own religious path. For now, it is his responsibility to fulfil his duty as a father and together with Jameela, raise their children as best they can.

The time spent raising children has implications for namely, children’s futures as Muslims, Islam’s continuity over time, and caregivers’ accountability in the Hereafter. By ‘time spent’ I refer to the different time-related dimensions that caregivers draw on to cultivate their children’s Muslim subjectivity. In the pages that follow I elucidate how caregivers understand the passage of time in terms of their children’s envisaged futures and present

dispositions. I show how the passage of time in everyday life is configured by caregivers to temporalize their children's days through religious practices, such as prayer and more. Lastly, I illuminate the value that caregivers put on spending time with their children and meaning made from their relationship. In so-doing, I argue that the cultivation of the child's Muslim subjectivity constitutes particular conceptualisations and uses of time (in addition to the foundation and emotional disposition) by caregivers. Specifically, how the inherent Islamic certainty of the Hereafter endows certainty and guides the beliefs and practices associated with the passage of time.

### Passage

As you recall, during *Ramadaan* I interviewed Yaqeen and Sarah about the holy month and we explored how Maryam is included in certain practices related to *Ramadaan*. At the time, Maryam was jumping back and forth between her parents and the couches they sat on. Yaqeen reflected on his childhood and said that he did not grow up in a household where they sat together during *Ramadaan* to spend time as a family. As a result, he wanted Maryam to experience a different family upbringing. To them, spending time with family, sharing food with neighbours, watching Islamic programmes together and engaging with one another during *Ramadaan* is extremely valuable to Maryam's religious foundation. Here, Yaqeen demonstrates how his family life experience as a child had "a presence and weight of the past in present life" (Pandian, 2012:548-49). In other words, Maryam's experience of family life is shaped by Yaqeen's childhood experience. Furthermore, Yaqeen was adamant that Maryam grow up with these values and practices so that she will carry them for the rest of her life and one-day pass these onto her own children. Here, Yaqeen anticipates a future for Maryam and one that includes a family of her own where she can emphasise time with family. The future Yaqeen anticipates for Maryam is similar among caregivers. Take for example a conversation I had with Amina about her children's growth.

Amina spoke and I nodded, my neck was sore but listening to her talk about motherhood and Islam was pleasant and easy. We talked about her children's days from waking up at six in the morning to getting home from school at five-thirty in the afternoon. We then moved onto her children's religiosity. She said that currently, as children, they are "sponge-like" and retain so much information that she tried to interlink as much *deen* [religion] as possible because their relationship was going to reach a point when she could no longer contribute as

much to their religiosity. I inquired,

**Yusra:** And they're going to be more... (?)

**Amina:** They're going to start sifting through; they're going to start becoming their own people. So all I can do is give them the strongest foundation I can that eventually when I do have to let them go that I can at least feel that I did do my duty-

Caregivers' are concerned to raise Muslim children and try to ensure that they grow up into Muslim adults. Their methods are shaped by their own life experiences and memories. As Pandian (2012) notes, the present is weighted with the past and prepared for an anticipated future - Yaqeen wants Maryam to experience Ramadaan as a family event, different from his own experiences. He anticipates that this value would "stick" through adulthood and even be passed onto her own children. Amina explicated this in more detail with a focus on her children's growth and the role she plays in their religiosity. Amina anticipated her children's growth marked by a gradual separation from her into "becoming their own people". What this means, for her, is that if she wants to feel secure in her children's futures as adults, Muslims and even parents, then she has to make sure that she does everything she can to make a solid and stable Islamic foundation that would persist once she has to "let go" of them.

The passage of time in the context of child-rearing constitutes a responsibility with an expiry date. Caregivers anticipate different "expiry dates" for their roles but all agreed that the first seven years were the most important for the child's religious foundation. Those with whom I worked are caring for children under seven, and, as I have shown earlier, are thus attentive to crafting "an invitation" to religious practice and spiritual development. Their broad framing is based on Islamic teachings. Some, such as Riad have a very specific way in which the present and the passage of time is managed to ensure the Islamic foundation of his children and their future. Since he emphasises following in the footsteps of the prophet to conduct his daily life, he also intends to adhere to a hadith from the prophet on how to raise children. As mentioned previously, the hadith states that the first seven years are meant for love only and the child has no religious obligation (hence the invitation that parents proffer, as described earlier in the thesis). The next seven years are meant for guidance and marked by religious obligation. The last seven years are meant for companionship and marked by the child's independence as a Muslim person. Here the *hadith* (the Prophet's messages) set out periods

of seven years that constitute different types of relationships the parent is meant to have with the child. In other words, the child's religious composition is ordered through specific sequences of action in and over time. At their current ages these children's lives are marked by innocence in that, in terms of Islamic thought, they are not held accountable for their actions before puberty. For the parents with whom I worked and as I experienced in my own childhood, the first seven years are marked by an imperative to make children feel loved and to ensure that any future religious obligation is presented to the child as religious invitation.

Thus far, the passage of time is conceived by participants through Islamic eschatology which largely underpins Muslim ontology. Through different social roles such as mother, father or child, a Muslim is expected to fulfil certain interpersonal responsibilities that have implications for their life after death. For the parents, their responsibility is to raise a Muslim child and which they would be accountable for in the Hereafter. For the child, their responsibility is to care for their parents in old age (if they reach it) which will also have implications for their Hereafter.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, the passage of time creates a particular meaning for the parent-child relationship, one where responsibility is transposed from the parent to the child. Caregivers frequently considered their children as future adults and how their role as parents is to ensure Islamic continuity in and through their children's futures. The passage of time is not only understood in terms of the Hereafter or children's futures, but how caregivers manage their children's time at present to ensure an Islamic foundation. In addition, caregivers have to consider their children's age and what is appropriate in practice to begin and develop the foundation.

#### *"This is my time": Parents and foundations*

A consideration of the child's cognitive development became clear to me one day while I chatted with Sarah. The TV was on in the background and Maryam was watching Tinkerbell. Sarah was talking about spending time with Maryam. Sarah is a lovely, doting mother who spends every day with Maryam and despite being pregnant with her second child, she barely grew tired. I asked her how she was incorporating Islam in Maryam's life at the moment and she responded, "So now with her being at this age we can only do what we can. For her, her

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<sup>61</sup> A hadith (saying/message) of the prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) said, "Your heaven lies under the feet of your mother".

brain is like a sponge. She absorbs everything so this is my time”.

Here Sarah considers Maryam’s cognitive development to have an absorbent nature which Sarah identifies as an opportunity to make as many associations with Islam as she can.

Previously Sarah mentioned that Maryam does not understand the meaning of *salaah* (prayer) for example, but understands that there is a significance behind the practice. Here, Sarah hopes that the significance Maryam attaches to the times and practices of *salaah* would foreground the meaning Maryam will make when she is older. Specifically meaning that is made through Islam and her Muslim subjectivity. The significance Maryam attaches to *salaah* then is part of the Islamic foundation Sarah and Yaqeen wish to instil. Sarah’s perception of Maryam’s ability to comprehend is shared amongst the caregivers with whom I worked. Sarah’s statement demonstrates particular notions around time that relate to how she planned on raising Maryam. Firstly, chronological age, development and cognitive capacity shape how Sarah understands her parenting and Maryam’s experience. Secondly, Sarah makes use of a reckoning of time in both her and Maryam’s life where her duty as a parent converges with Maryam’s religious upbringing.

Sarah described how she invited Maryam to make *salaah* with her every *waqtu* (prayer time), allowed Maryam to watch her take *wudhu* (ablution) and put down Maryam’s *Muslah* (prayer mat). When I spoke to Yaqeen during Ramadaan he also mentioned that when the *athaan* sounded from the mosque down the road they told Maryam to keep quiet. This was reinforced through a hand gesture of the index finger raised over their closed mouth. Over time, according to her parents, Maryam would also alert her parents to the *athaan* with the same gesture and go “shhhh!”. Sarah was happy that Maryam could recognise the *athaan* because it was the fruition of the associations she was making. To Sarah, Maryam demonstrates an assimilation of the practices that form part of her Islamic foundation. Furthermore, Maryam’s actions reaffirm Sarah’s belief that what she sows now as small associations will be reaped in future which incentivises her to continue her mechanisms. When it came to *Maghrib*, for example, Sarah and Yaqeen made an association between closing blinds and the *athaan* to signal the end of the day.

Zainab and Zahied described this process in terms of accustoming their children to Islamic practice. Every now and then they would interrupt one another with slight banter to inquire about what the other person just told me. Zahied was still watching the game and Zainab sat

with her daughter. Zainab explained that she was always used to praying with the children on her arm when they were infants. Her daughter, Safiyah was used to being in her mommy's company when she prayed and would sometimes mimic her mom. Zahied also mentioned that every night when he put the children to bed, he made sure that they recited their *ash-hadu* (testament to God) and three *quls* (three short chapters in the Quraan) before they slept.<sup>62</sup> Sarah too had described a similar ritual in the evening though she recited the *kalimah* (a testament to God - same as *ash-hadu*) with Maryam instead of the *quls*. She also described how every morning Maryam had to greet her parents and sister (in the womb) and say *shukran* (thank you) to Allah for letting her wake up and live another day.<sup>104</sup>

When it comes to the foundation, caregivers emphasise that this age is about inviting children to participate in certain practices and rituals. The associations caregivers create for the child's foundation such as salaah with the Muslah, is not just limited to associations between practice and paraphernalia or actions, but also with time. The *athaan* that was in earshot of Sarah and Yaqeen's home let Maryam know that at particular times during the day her mother was going to pray. Whether she understood that it happened every day, five times a day, we do not know, but her gesture of silence at the *athaan*'s call is a clear indication that she knew something significant was about to happen that required a change in behaviour. For her parents, this was enough: the association and familiarity with the practice was their aim in the advent stages of building their child's religious foundation. The aim is to temporalise their children's daily life with religious observances that shape the patterns of everyday life. Even the recitation every night and the gratitude for waking up in the morning are more ways of temporalizing daily patterns that set preliminary and easy associations for the child.

The passage of time then constitutes a concern for the future (both the children's adult futures and everyone's Hereafter) and a temporalisation of the present. The foundation parents believe they are laying in the home, ensures that children feel emotionally connected to Islam and follow the religion the way their parents taught them. As Sarah put it, what parents sow now are early associations and observances for the children so that these can function as a foundation that will help their children grow as Muslims. However, as the previous chapter showed, for the foundation to carry on until adulthood and for these early practices to form

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<sup>62</sup> The "Quls" are the three last surah's in the quraan and considered to cast protection on someone who reads them.

solid parts of the foundation, caregivers have to instil a feeling; observance is not sufficient. Instilling a feeling is based on caregivers priming their children's emotions for believing in Islam and practicing their religious duties. I extend this discussion now by showing how one way in which caregivers frame their role in shaping children's emotions is that they had to be the ones that were there to ensure their children's religious upbringing. In other words, they had to be present.

### "Being there": On presence

Yaqeen's difficult childhood made him reflect on what he wanted to do differently with his children now that he was a parent. Yaqeen was in the middle of lamenting his childhood when I asked what he could do differently to raise his children Muslim. He said that he would spend more time with his children. He was serious about this. He previously had a job that did not spare him enough time with Maryam or his salaah, so he sought a new one that gave him the time for his religious obligation and time with his daughter. Others also described the experience of "making time" for children. Riad, for example, decided to focus on this as part of his new morally upright Muslim identity. One day Jameela described the effects to me as we were sitting on the grass, having a lovely chat. She described how over the past few weeks she had to adjust to his presence, and our conversation then shifted to the effects on the children:

**Yusra:** and how has his interaction changed with the children since?

**Jameela:** With the boys he's got more patience. A lot more patience.

**Yusra:** Like how was he before and compared to now?

**Jameela:** like he was never around, he wouldn't spend time with the boys, wouldn't change a nappy, wouldn't bath them, wouldn't do anything. But now he's around more, he's doing a lot more for boys. Like he'll look out for the boys like he will be like 'they can't be too long with that nappy on', 'when last was that nappy changed?', 'let me check you', 'put your shoes on before you go outside', 'put a cap on', do this do that. So I'm like 'ok kwaai I can leave you alone with the boys - sometimes.'<sup>63</sup>

As described earlier, Jameela found Riad's new religious presence stressful but when it came

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<sup>63</sup> Kwaai here means 'cool'.

to their children Jameela felt a sense of relief that Riad was actively involved in his children's day to day activities. When it came to developing "the foundation" and "instilling a feeling", the realisation of these in their children was achieved over time and by investing time. Simply put, if caregivers want to normalise *salaah*, routinize small prayers before bed and in the morning, or make sure that their children became emotionally aroused for specific religious practices, they had to be "present". Here, presence refers to being physically present and emotionally attentive to their children. Yaqeen attributes the lack of a connection between him and his father to the lack of time his father spent nurturing his religiosity. For both Yaqeen and Riad, being consistently "present" is a way in which they can ensure their children's Islamic foundation but also to ensure that their children make meaning of their relationship on an emotional level. Yaqeen mentioned that his connection with Maryam is meant to pave the way to a connection with God and Islam. In other words, he sees himself as the conduit. As he explained further, an emotional connection with her father is meant to "stick with her" in adulthood and become a means of mediating her actions in the world. The connection is not just described as positive and loving but also constituted negative emotions. At the end of our discussion Yaqeen mentioned that the one thing his parents instilled in him was the fear of disappointing them. He wanted to do same for Maryam although her fear of disappointment is meant to be based on her loving and respectful connection with her father and not just fear. Here, disappointment is a key force in shaping children's behaviour that relates to a sense of reciprocity and obligation in the parent-child relationship. The foundation caregivers wish to instil is intimately related to the desires and expectations caregivers endow in a Muslim subjectivity. The anticipation of not reaping the benefits of what they sow now is worrisome particularly in light of the Hereafter. Therefore, Maryam's fear of disappointing her parents is not limited to them but extends to a disappointment of God too.

The way caregivers consider time is constitutive of their Muslim existence and their understanding of temporality is not separated from their daily experiences. Their subjective notions of how time passes is shaped by their daily lives and experiences of raising their children, together with the eschatological perception of time informed by Islamic precepts. When it comes to how they intend to use time with their children, in some cases, caregivers reflect on their past as shaping their present to diverge or converge with their previous experiences. As Munn states, the present lived experience is always infused (and infusing)

with pasts and futures through “relevant retentions and protensions” (Munn, 1992: 115). Furthermore, “ways of attending to the past also create modes of apprehending certain futures, or of reconstructing a particular sense of the past in the present that informs the treatment of ‘the future in the present’” (Munn, 1992: 115).

Here Munn theorises succinctly the way caregivers deal with their past, their present and their children’s futures. Past experiences are either weighted negatively or positively in the present and the current situation of forming an Islamic foundation in and for their children inform how they understand and conduct daily life.

An added dimension to child-rearing with a consideration of time is to do with context and era. Yaqeen, Riad and Abdeah mentioned that the current context in which they were raising their children plays an important role in how the Islamic foundation they intend to instil would fare. All three caregivers contrast today’s context with their own and said that the biggest difference is technology, social media and accessibility to so much information via the internet. Yaqeen is concerned with what he called “the ugliness” of this world and said that as a consequence, the foundation he intends to instil needs to be strong. Riad on the other hand, mentioned that censorship is difficult these days especially if the television displayed so many things that were *haram* (not permissible) such as half naked people, for example. Therefore, he limited the content of the TV to Islamic channels or news and rather encouraged his boys to play instead of watching TV. For Abdeah, her concern is the internet, the easy accessibility to all types of information and the vulnerability a child might be to succumb to a lifestyle that is at best not Islamic and at worst, *haram*. The only way caregivers can make peace with the context of their children’s upbringing and adulthood is to ensure that currently, they form a solid foundation in their children’s early childhood.

### Epilogue

Once I sat in Madrassah, as usual at the back, and watched my sheikh draw a line on the board. He referred to this line as the passage of time and wanted to make a point about our existence. He marked off important moments such as the creation of earth, the dinosaur age and ancient civilisation which cut the line into smaller segments. Then with even smaller segments he marked the lifespans of some of the prophets who lived until over a hundred years old. Then to end off, and to make his point, he came to our lifespan and simply put a

dot on this grand linear scale of time. He said to us that we should not overestimate our existence and that the lifespan we have is merely a bat of an eyelid. Instead, to make our lives meaningful and long-lasting, is to dedicate our existence to the worship of God and do everything for the sake of Allah.

For all the caregivers included here, their ontological existence is underpinned by a particular understanding of the passage of time. Our lifespan (as my *sheikh* demonstrated with a dot) is nothing compared to the eternity we would experience after death and Heaven (as the place of our infinite occupation in the Hereafter) is essentially what caregivers are aiming for. The consideration by caregivers of their children's capability to understand and participate in religious beliefs and practices foreground what caregivers felt was appropriate introductions. The purpose is to create the religious 'foundation', meant to take place within the first seven years of life, and intended to withstand the passage of time and changing of contexts. The way time is used and spent in the context of child-rearing demonstrates the value caregivers place on their relationship with their children. This relationship is somewhat contractual in that the responsibility of both a child and parent is clearly demarcated by Islamic prescription. However, its contract-like elements are softened by the emotional connection caregivers feel with their children. For these children to grow up as practicing Muslims, caregivers have to put copious amount of time and effort into raising their children every day. Furthermore, their responsibility to raise religious children is considered a gradual process that starts with preliminary associations and would eventually form part of children's participation in religious activities.

Caregivers demonstrate a reckoning with the present that is infused with past experiences and concerns for the future. The day to day temporalisation of time through *salaah* and saying a prayer in the morning and night, for example, are mechanisms of time caregivers use to reinforce their children's foundation. These religious practices punctuated daily life, which contribute to the child's subjectivity of time. Therefore, caregivers carefully tailor certain religious practices to meet the child's comprehension and become normalised in their day to day lives. One way caregivers felt certain would ensure some part of the foundation is to be present and consistent. By being a present and involved parent, caregivers hoped to create a meaningful life for their children that ensured the continuity of Islam over time and hopefully their positive result in the hereafter.

## *Chapter 7: The End*

## Conclusion

I have argued that even if all Muslims ascribe to the same religion, it does not mean that their lived experiences are similar. To demonstrate this argument, I conducted an ethnography that looked at early childhood and the role Islam plays in children's lives. The child, at the centre of this research, is the site of caregivers' practices, ideas, beliefs and notions in making the Muslim subjectivity. To be a Muslim is created by and embedded in two dimensions, namely the Muslim ontology and Muslim subjectivity. In short, Muslim ontology refers to the profound belief in the omnipotence of God, and the implications that life on earth have for the Hereafter. Here, everyone will be held accountable for the way they live their lives and conduct themselves in mannerisms and interpersonal relations. Muslim subjectivity is situated in people's lived experiences that are contextually varied. How one should and could live is presented through multiple modalities, namely, the main prescription of Quraan and Hadith, religious leaders, friends and family, social media, and different schools of thought such as Hanafi and Shafi. The way Muslims interpret and embody these forces differ in context, generation and individual. In other words, what it means to be a Muslim and how to live an Islamic life varies.

In a similar vein, child rearing is multi-faceted, largely unpredictable and comes with immense responsibility. For caregivers, their accountability in the Hereafter depends on how they go about raising their children as Muslims. It matters that their children grow up Muslim and that caregivers try their best to ensure their children become believing, practicing Muslims. How to parent - similarly to how one should live as a Muslim - is presented through different modalities. Here caregivers presented their own views on what it means to be a Muslim and how one should practice Islam. More importantly, I show how their views are intimately woven with how they are raising their children.

By looking at the child as a site of inquiry, I could consider how their caregivers' thoughts and practices shape the child's early childhood but most of all their subjectivity, as particularly shaped by Islam. My research demonstrates that to cultivate a Muslim subjectivity and identity requires consistent effort, attention and time by parents who wish to fulfil their religious duties and see their children become the Muslims they currently envision. However, I do not suggest that a Muslim subjectivity can only be cultivated in early

childhood, hence Shahid and Taskeen who situated theirs much later in life. Early childhood is marked by an impetus because children are still perceived as new, vulnerable and malleable. Yet they are not stripped of agency and have definitive roles to play in their own upbringing, hence the way caregivers described the way their children's personalities play definitive roles in how they went about parenting. To raise a Muslim child, requires consistent inclusion of the child into Islamic practices, the delicate work of emotions, and a particular inhabitation of the passage of time. Concurrently, to raise a Muslim child is to do so with a particular hope that what caregivers do in their children's early childhood will withstand a lifetime. It is an envisaged future that can only try to be ensured and is in no way guaranteed.

By contextualising Muslim subjectivity in an ethnography on early childhood, I was able, for a moment, to dislodge the cultivation of a Muslim from the hegemonic representations of Islam as a violent religion. In our contemporary context, it is difficult to envisage Islam and a Muslim without imagining the violence that has been associated with it. What this ethnography shows is that being Muslim cannot be reduced to following a prescribed religion. Islam may exist in canon and institutions that have structure and regulations that shape an individual, however, the lived experience of Islam constitutes people's subjective experiences that are shaped in dynamic contexts and through various forces. Therefore, to account for the variations of how a Muslim is envisaged and cultivated, the individual (or here, the child) should be made the site at which ideas and practices converge into something meaningful.

It is a succinctly illustrated argument when caregivers mention that who they were before their first child no longer withstood the motions of daily life and who they needed to be for those children took precedence. What first stood out was their different backgrounds, childhoods and histories and how each participant came to a sense of being Muslim that is their own. As a couple, what it means to be Muslim is shared between spouses and as parents, what it means to be a Muslim converges in each child who will grow up to have a Muslim subjectivity of their own one day. Caregivers illustrate changes over time and how being a Muslim is suffused with different phases of life. This means that being a Muslim is not consolidated or finalised at any point in life, but that it is always on-going.

## Glossary of terms

<i>'adab</i>	Islamic etiquette specifically related to having good mannerisms
<i>Allah</i>	A name for God
<i>Allahu-akbar</i>	God is great. Usually said when prayer commences
<i>Alhamdulillah</i>	All praise be to God
<i>Ameer (Amir)</i>	Translated as Prince. Used here as a title for the head of the home
<i>Ash-hadu (shahadah)</i>	Testification of faith in God through Islamic tenet
<i>Athaan</i>	The call to prayer
<i>Bismillah</i>	With the name of God or in the name of God
<i>Boekah</i>	A colloquial word for Iftaar which refers to breaking the fast at sunset during Ramadaan
<i>Burkah</i>	A headscarf that can be pulled over the head without tying it
<i>Da'wah</i>	translated to 'invitation' by inviting people to Islam/ spread of Islam
<i>Deen</i>	Translates to religion. Especially religious observances related to Islam
<i>Doekie</i>	A colloquial/slang play on Afrikaans word "doek" which means "scarf"
<i>Dunya</i>	A term that refers to earth, but specifically life 'in this world'
<i>Fez</i>	A cap that Muslim men wear. Colloquially referred to as a kufiyah
<i>Five Pillars of Islam</i>	In Islam the five pillars are prescribed requirements of every Muslim. These are namely, the Shahadah (ash-hadu); prayer five times a day; Give zakat which is charity; fast in the month of Ramadaan; and complete hajj at least once in a lifetime.
<i>Ghadat</i>	A tradition formed by Muslim slaves where men and women gather to make thikr
<i>Ghidaya (hidaya)</i>	Translated as "guidance". Specifically, guidance from God
<i>Hadith (ahadith)</i>	a collection of the Prophet's sayings that constitute as a major source of guidance for Muslims in daily life
<i>Hajj</i>	Annual pilgrimage to Makkah (Mecca) for Muslims and is one of the Five Pillars of Islam

<i>Halaal</i>	Denotes that which is permissible for a Muslim. For example, halaal food refers to a particular way that food (especially meat) gets prepared consistent with Muslim law
<i>Hanafi</i>	a religious school that is based on reason and discussion of the hadith and Quranic precepts so Islamic ethic and etiquette is relevant to changing times.
<i>Ibaadah</i>	in terms of Islam, ibaadah means the obedience, submission and devotion to God
<i>Iftaar (boekah)</i>	The meal eaten to breakfast during Ramadaan at sunset
<i>Imam</i>	A Muslim man who leads prayer and one people may seek for guidance
<i>Iqaamah</i>	The second call to Islamic prayer given immediately before prayer beings
<i>iTV</i>	Islam television. Channel that broadcasts live stream to Makkah
<i>Kak</i>	“Shit” in Afrikaans. This is used as a colloquial term which is used to describe or put emphasis on something
<i>Kalimah (shahadah)</i>	The kalimah refers to the declaration of a Muslim to Islam.
<i>Kwaai</i>	translated to ‘bad, angry, aggressive’ in Afrikaans but appropriated into colloquial slang to mean ‘cool, great’.
<i>Laila-tul-qadr</i>	translated to “night of power”. On one of the odd nights during the last 10 days of Ramadaan, this night is when God is most merciful and bountiful. Sins are forgiven and rewards are abundant.
<i>Madhabs</i>	Madhab is a particular tradition of interpreting Islamic jurisprudence. considered here as religious schools of thought
<i>Maghrib</i>	the fourth prayer of the day marked by sunset
<i>Makkah (mecca)</i>	The region in Saudi where the ka’bah is situated and where pilgrimages are performed
<i>Muslah</i>	A colloquial term for ‘prayer mat’
<i>Nabi</i>	translates to ‘prophet’ or ‘messenger’
<i>Prophet</i>	Here Prophet refers specifically to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) the last messenger of God

<i>Quls</i>	refers to the last three surah's in the Quraan and encouraged to be recited daily for protection
<i>Quraan</i>	Sacred text of Islam believed to be come directly from God and untouched by human alterations
<i>Ramadaan</i>	The ninth month is the Muslim calendar that is marked by fasting from sunrise till sunset by all Muslims
<i>(S.A.W)</i>	<i>sallallahu- 'alaihi-wasallam</i> translated as peace be upon him
<i>Salaah</i>	The prescribed activity of worship observed five times a day. It is one of the pillars of Islam
<i>Salaam</i>	Abbreviation for the full greeting, "Assalaamu- 'a-lykom", meaning peace be upon you. "Assalaamu- 'a-lyki" is meant to be used when greeting a woman
<i>Samoosa</i>	triangle savoury that has filling and must be deep fried
<i>Subhana-wu-wata 'ala</i>	Translated as "praise be to God the most high"
<i>Shafi</i>	One of the madhabs (next to Hanafi) that is stricter in adherence to Hadith and Quranic prescriptions
<i>Shaytaan</i>	translated to "satan". The devil.
<i>Sheikh (sheigh)</i>	A leader (usually men) in a Muslim community
<i>Shi'a</i>	A branch of Islam that puts leadership with Imams who are considered descendants of a companion the prophet handpicked to be his successor
<i>Shukran</i>	translated to "thanks"
<i>Sunni</i>	The second main branch of Islam that is commonly described as orthodox. Also refers to Shafi
<i>Ta'lim</i>	Translated as "to know". Related to the education of Islam
<i>Tadib</i>	Translated "refined and disciplined" through education and is related to 'adab
<i>Taqdeer</i>	This refers to the predestination bestowed by God. God creates something into existence with a certain time and purpose. It will not last longer or shorter than it should. In other words, God has the total and final say in something's (or someone's) existence.
<i>Tarbiyah</i>	Translated as "to grow". Related to the nurturance of Muslim children and their guidance to maturity as Muslims
<i>Thikr (dhikr)</i>	A spoken remembrance of God through repetition of God's names or attributes

*Waqtu*

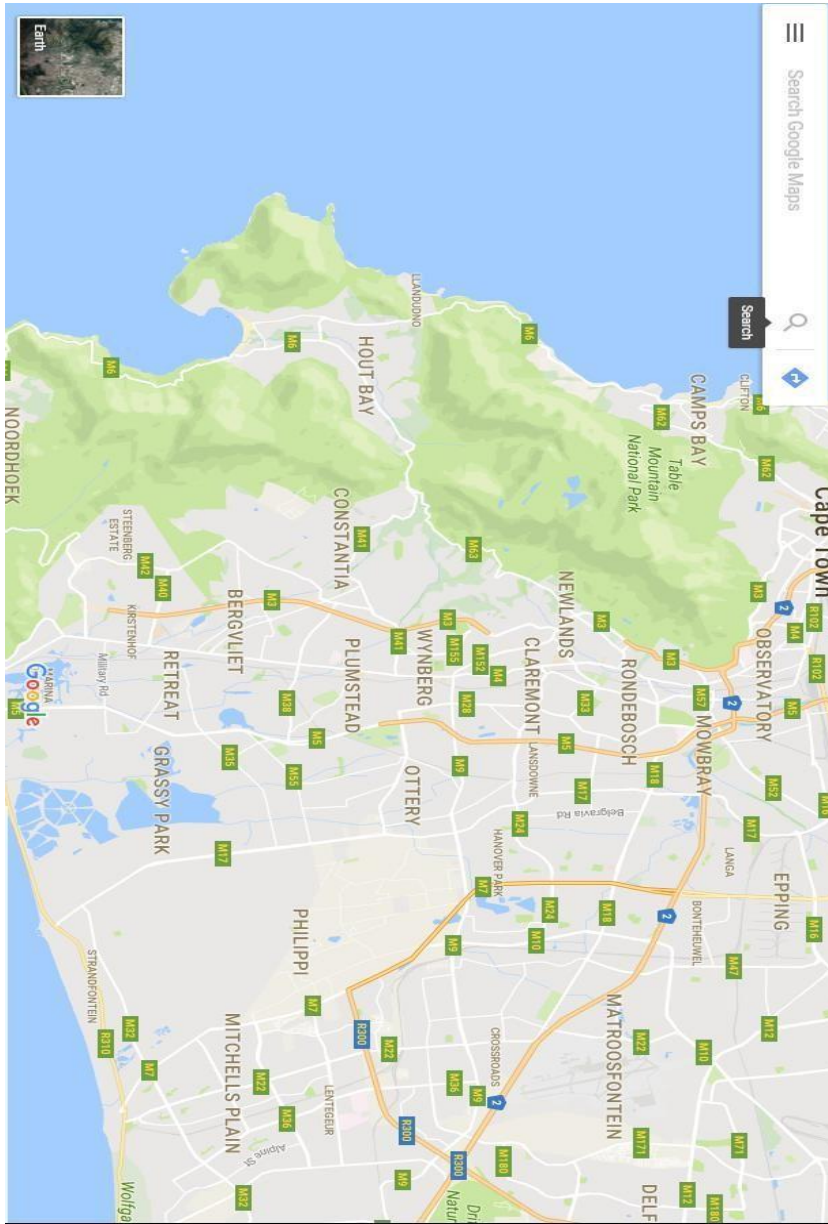
Refers to contexts of time: An inevitable passing of events i.e. someone's death by saying the waqtu was there. Time as in quantity of time left available i.e. a waqt of salaah.

*Wudhu*

A ritual washing that creates a state of purity before prayer

# Appendix A:

## Cape Town Southern Suburbs and Peninsula



Retrieved at <https://www.google.com/maps/@-34.0104986,18.4754734,12z?hl=en>, on 22 August, 2016

## Appendix B

In Cape Town various malls and shops will wish Muslims a happy Ramadaan.



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