At the intersection of Patriarch Street, Flower Street and Neo-Orientalist Lane:
the oral histories of Afghan women living in Australia

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Statement of Originality

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Signature...............................................

Date....................................................
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Abstract

This is a qualitative empirical thesis which will examine the lived reality behind the visual representation of the veiled Afghan woman in the blue burqa. ‘Reality’, is defined as “the state of things as they are or appear to be, rather than as one might wish them to be”. (Hanks 1979, p, 1216). Eight Afghan women, now living in Australia articulate their experience of the residue of cultural and political warfare throughout the Russian (1979–1989), mujahedeen (1985–1989) and Taliban (1994–2001) regimes. The participating women, from Hazara, Tajik and Pashtun tribal groups, expose multiple layers of gendered inequality because of strict patriarchy, and cultural ethnicity in Afghanistan. Their stories illustrate how Afghan women also traverse the western pre-determined and prevailing stereotypical perceptions of the Muslim Other.

Nineteenth century Afghan cameleers heralded Islamism into Australia; but it was the events of 11th September 2001 that shone a spotlight on Afghan women in the blue burqa, their stories were concealed beneath the camouflage of retaliation with the West thwarting the chances of social justice for them. Examining visual images is a powerful way to illuminate the disturbing residue of cultural and political conflict no one wants to see. The veiled Afghan woman is breaking new ground, telling her story and claiming her right to represent herself as a woman, “laying bare the prejudices beneath the smooth surface of the beautiful” (Rose, 2007, p. 75), challenging the social effects of meaning as well as our capacity to see, to listen.

I will support this examination by engaging with a participatory paradigm based on an objective-subjective ontology. John Heron and Peter Reason (1997), incorporated a co-operative methodology, as well as a broad range of ways of knowing. This method enables the use of visual images of veiled Afghan women that are widely viewed through a tangled western perception of Islamic values and ideologies. Researching visual images is an effective way to elucidate the often hidden, largely unconsidered impact of cultural and political conflict on these women. In so doing, the lived reality of Afghan women, vividly illuminates the morals
of exclusion and inclusion and the invisibility and hyper-visibility more vividly from the point of view of being 'the Other.'

Decades of conflict have altered the Afghanistan humanitarian landscape, affecting social and cultural practices for Afghan women in especially damaging ways. In the words of Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations, “Human rights are what reason requires and conscience demands. They are us and we are them” (Annan, 1997, p.1).

Key words: Afghan women, patriarchy, Intersectionality, Orientalism, The Muslim Other, warfare, visual representation, palimpsest
Chapter One: Laying bare the prejudices across cultural boundaries
Foreword

Two compelling visual images representing covered women and oscillating between the juxtaposition of past and present inform my research. The first image (Fig. 1) is a painting of a Muslim woman from the nineteenth century by Sir Arthur Streeton. The second is the contemporary video image of an Afghan woman in a burqa produced by Mr Rahraw Omarzad (2008), an Afghan artist based in Kabul, Afghanistan (Fig. 2). Such intentional visual placement is included to demonstrate the emotional power of images that are informed, and rely on the epistemology of a western perception of knowledge.

Figure 1. Arthur Streeton Fatma Habibi 1897 (Cairo 29 x 27 cm). Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide; Gift of Mr and Mrs Douglas Mullins, 1997
These visual images (Figs. 1 and 2) frame my analysis, providing the opportunity to bring to light layers of authoritative and informative historical sources. Respectively, they each invite
examination into the rationale for using images of veiled Muslim women to enquire into layers of meaning; thus begins the visual narrative that runs alongside the written narrative of this research. With this intention, I engage firstly with the nineteenth century image of Fatma Habibi (Fig. 1) by Streeton to validate the Orientalist lens, the framework western cultures have used for centuries, to stereotype people from unfamiliar cultural backgrounds (Carland, 2017, p. 39).

Streeton’s nineteenth century symbolic image of a veiled woman, Fatma Habibi, “captures the vagueness and mystery of the veiled Fatma”, there are no other signifiers (Tzavaras, 2008, p. 10). This image instigates an understanding of the continuous power of visual representation that has a long and pernicious history in Australia. For me, the painting roused forgotten thoughts and feelings about cultural differences and acted as the catalyst for an autobiographical and visual ethnographical study of human culture. Through the lens of a feminist epistemology, I identified the image of Fatma with current cultural activities and many Australians’ anti-Muslim sentiments, sentiments that alarmed me and were foreign within my own experiences and multi-cultural and diverse family.

I was also curious about Streeton’s association with Fatma, the subject of the painting. While Streeton’s work has been discussed and published extensively¹ none have covered Streeton’s painting of Fatma Habibi. There is no provenance tracking this painting, indeed, the silence demands the story behind the portrayal. There is no documentation of the painting until 1997 when it was found, purchased, authenticated, and bequeathed to the Art Gallery of South Australia by Mr and Mrs Douglas Mullins (Benjamin, 2003, p. 137). It was then exhibited by Professor Rodger Benjamin in the 1997 Orientalism Delacroix to Klee exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Benjamin (1997) was the first scholar to certify Streeton’s visual image of a veiled woman and expand on Streeton’s time in Cairo, exploring the notion of the colonialist Orientalist visual representation of the Muslim Other. I suggest that the one-hundred-year estrangement of this painting of a veiled woman is because of Australia’s enduring dilemma, the race question. Coupled with my lengthy and robust interest in the intersections of cross-culture and cultural difference, this line of inquiry has fashioned my research and my interest in the subconscious bias of an Orientalist memory. This is further explored in Chapter 1.

**Streeton’s historical visual representation in art**

My 2008 Master’s degree included a summarised study of Streeton the artist and an analysis of his Cairo works, this included the painting of *Fatma Habibi* (Fig. 2). The analysis was from an art perspective informed by Benjamin’s *Orientalism: Delacroix to Klee* (1997) and Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1979). At the time of painting Fatma, Streeton was a nascent tourist in Egypt captivated by what he saw:

> The tall minarets towering into the brilliant blue sky, the dazzling and sparkling clarity and crispness of white were all captured in his Cairo paintings, such as Cairo Street 1897, the domicile of Fatma Habibi (Benjamin 2003 p. 4).

Streeton’s painting of *Fatma Habibi* highlights the prolonged and intense interest and strong feelings Western society has with ‘the veil’. “Streeton’s iconic image of Fatma Habibi positions the distance travelled from the nineteenth century western perception of Islamic women. Streeton was aware that it was impossible to find a devout and covered Muslim woman to pose as a model” (Tzavaras, 2008, p. 6). A century after the painting was completed, and after the terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001, Bailey and Tawadros (2003) noted on the cover of their book *Veil: Veiling, representation, and contemporary art* “no single item of clothing has had more influence on Western images of Middle Eastern and North African women than the veil”.

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Under the cover of a burqa

The second image, *The Third One* (Fig. 2) is a still from a video protesting gender apartheid and exploring both the physical and metaphysical spaces under the cover of a burqa. The video relates the life and existence for Afghan women under the Taliban regime. The irony of the image (Fig. 2) is how female subjectification is generated from the perspective of a male artist. Despite the artist’s muse being masked, there is a strange beauty in this video still. It shows the cultural norm for covered Afghan women where a woven grille conceals her face, yet allows her to see out while preventing others from seeing in. The beauty in the close-up image is the spirit in the woman’s eyes and how the artist, Omarzad, has captured, through the burqa grille, the strength of her mind; in this he has encapsulated what is in her heart.

Omarzad was interviewed by Chandler (2014, p. 1), where he explained, the title *The Third One* refers to the three periods or interruptions in the development of visual arts in Afghanistan. The first period was in the sixteenth century with Afghan artefacts, materials, ideas, motifs, and styles related to Ancient Babylon, Alexander the Great, Persia, and Imperial Rome, to the Mauryan (Indian) and Kushan empires. The second period was in the twentieth century when Western art began to have some influence in Afghan art that was then thwarted by the years of civil war in the 1970s. Omarzad claims it was impossible during times of conflict “to break the circle of repetition in visual arts and ... to have the freedom to use a variety of materials to express ideas. The third period started after 2002 with the new movement” (Chandler, 2014, p. 1) after the fall of the Taliban.

This movement has mostly been supported by international artists who visit Afghanistan, give workshops and seminars and invite Afghan artists abroad. Such opportunities have been really important to this development (Ashton, 2014, p. 1).

My own contribution to emerging female Afghan artists fits within this period.
My private visit to Afghanistan

I met Mr Omarzad at the Centre for Contemporary Arts Afghanistan (CCAA) where he lectured in art at Kabul University. I had a background in visual arts and had presented a paper on my art practice to the Kabul University art students in 2005. It was a privilege to see Mr Omazad’s video work (Fig. 2) at CCAA as he was reclaiming the contemporary art position he held in the 1970s. Mr Omarzad came to Australia in 2006 as a photographer, funded by the Afghan Government and the Red Crescent, an affiliation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to document the rehabilitation of Australian defence personnel who had lost limbs in the Afghan conflict from landmines. During this visit Mr Omarzad was my houseguest.

I initiated meetings with leading art institutions in Sydney and Mr Omarzad received invitations from art bodies to arrange exhibitions for emerging Afghan female contemporary artists to exhibit their work in Sydney. In the context of a possible art exchange, Mr Omarzad seemed concerned because the patriarchal practices imposed directly on Afghan women deprive them of autonomy. Mr Omazard explained that young Afghan women could be forsaken if they were to participate in the art exchange as a public forum: they would be considered undesirable if they ventured overseas and losing their modesty would restrict their chances for marriage; as such, it seemed an improbable undertaking.

This motivated me to instigate a project that would raise awareness of the position of women in the arts in Afghanistan. In 2011, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) granted $AU 6,000 to fund an exhibition in Kabul. Over time, and in conjunction with Mr Omarzad, I mobilised support from 30 well-known Australian artists to exhibit their work in Afghanistan. The contemporary artists, male and female, from the Sydney region provided works on paper, fabric art, ink, acrylic and oil paint as well as photography to fulfil the scale criteria stipulation of a 30 x 30 cm artwork; the pieces were packed carefully for conveyance as luggage. Together, Mr Omarzad and I curated the first contemporary art exhibition of Australian artists in Afghanistan. The aim of the exhibition was twofold: to engage with emerging female Afghan artists, and to raise funds for a local Afghan orphanage I had visited (as detailed later in this section).

The DFAT funding meant a great deal for the CCAA as it is entirely self-funded. Mr. Omarzad receives no funding from Afghan sources, relying solely on international artists who contribute resources to conduct workshops and seminars, particularly in the electronic arts such as digital video and photography. The DFAT grant allowed them to purchase supplies and materials. I was shocked at the lack of available art materials. Paper appeared impossible to source and quality oil paints in a tube were extremely costly. Local artists used motor oil as a medium for cheap
Chinese oil paints. They painted on anything they could find; discarded paper, cardboard, or old fabric and practised the old rote method, with very few practical aspects observed in the weeks I spent at the timeworn house that acted as a gallery.

Not surprisingly, the Australian artworks were mysterious to the emerging female Afghan artists and while they readily identified the methodology and application they remained suspicious of subliminal messages by Western artists. Carland (2017) reminds us, “there is also a linguistic component to the way feminism is seen as wholly Western and thus foreign” (p. 27). In fact, in the Farsi speaking world of Iran and Afghanistan no word exists for feminism which explains the interchangeable use of the word feminism and women’s rights, which is occasionally more acceptable to Afghan women, and why “Western feminists are viewed with a deep sense of wariness” (p. 27) as an interest in feminism can been seen as treasonous or un-Islamic. I was therefore delighted to witness the enthusiasm of the female artists as they prepared the gallery for the exhibition of Australian works; nearly two hundred people attended the opening as well as government dignitaries, and local television and radio presenters. Ms Nancy Hatch Dupree, the Director of the Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University, who has written on Afghan history and culture since 1962 when she first went to Afghanistan came to purchase an Afghan art work for a visiting American dignity; she expressed her pleasure that Australians were supporting CCAA. When the exhibition ended, the artworks were packed and taken back to Australia where they were auctioned and a cheque for more than $AU6,000 was presented to an orphanage in Kabul, Afghanistan.

I see art as a response and an attempt to capture another aspect of the world we live in. An exhibition of Australian art provided Afghan women from CCAA with a way of seeing art as an expression to communicate peace and social justice. Conversely, I see the images of veiled women by Western popular media as a strategy of war to prompt viewers and readers into justifying military and political operations and reassert American values in the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan (Hersford, 2005). For instance, a key point Berger (1980) implies is that while constant and successive images may appear ambiguous they can construct an argument that can either reverse or qualify the viewer’s opinion; this is significant in the case of images of burqa-clad Afghan women.

Personal affirmation

I would like to know much more concerning Afghan women as they traverse from war to peace, but there is a danger that my interest might be perceived as a colonialist project, exploiting participants who are a minority and part of a vulnerable group. And so, it is
imperative to clarify my standpoint. It has been suggested my research might be considered an inverted relationship because of my Western epistemological and psychological knowledge as a civilised European and the layers of white privilege that affords (Razack, 1998). At a Western Sydney University conference Razach (1998, 2007) spoke about her post-colonialist work with Canadian indigenous people; her advice was to ‘switch the situation’, this has stayed foremost in my mind throughout my investigation. Her reference to looking white people in the eye and stealing the pain of others validates how I can only see one side of life. The notion of homophony is therefore important in my work; homophony is a texture or sound supported by one or more additional strands/sounds/voices. Homophony is integral to my research; the idea is to negotiate and coordinate the diverse voices, including my own voice, in this research. I acknowledge my academic and personal voice, the voices of experts, research participants and the sometimes-conflicting voice and personal affiliations that influence the tensions and contrasts in my research. The following retrospective narrative recognises a posteriori knowledge of the social world in Australia in the mid twentieth century. With this intention, I expose a palimpsest of cultural diversity that defines my sense of self as a researcher with a narrative from my past to depict a cultural disparity.

**Stranger Danger**

*This is a story of personal experience, a narrative that depicts a childhood experience that brings a critical sociological gaze to my own work and world view. It resonates with the work of Richardson (1997), who claims by “writing stories and collaboration across the humanities/social science divide … more different voices are honoured within our qualitative community, [and] the stronger and more interesting that community will be” (p. 959). I write a reflective autobiographical account of the self, written from a fixed point in time to assist the reader to position the author’s interest in the fruitful exchange of cultural difference. My personal narrative paints a picture of a childhood past and brings into focus twentieth-century issues of colonialism, sovereignty, and racial difference, issues that cling stubbornly to present-day Australian society.*

*In the early 1950s, I was at the heart of an immigration project, the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electricity Scheme, where skilled immigrants were contracted from around the world to carry out specialised work. That same precinct is now a winter paradise and the cultural disparity, the geographical sparseness, the historical and social structure of*
my small childhood village has been replaced with chalets and chair lifts. Some of my early childhood memories are of
the Snowy Mountains, in the Kosciusko National Park, New South Wales, where my father was employed by the
Hydro Electricity Scheme. My backyard was the snowfields. The mountainous landscape was an adventure, a place
of great expectation and excitement. I recall the large yellow earth-moving vehicles with black wheels of mammoth
proportions dwarfed by a mountainous backdrop. Adventurous young men from countries such as Belgium, France,
Greece, and Italy came to Australia as skilled migrant workers to work on the Hydro Electricity Scheme. There was
an explosion of foreign language, music, food, and laughter. From my child’s perspective, I cannot authentically
identify the tensions, hostilities, mistrust, or uneasy feelings that are associated with negotiating the transition of
cultural difference. My childhood observations were that Australians and immigrants worked in the underground
mines and shafts, changing the natural landscape with dynamite explosions and then dined together at the end of the
day.

My family lived in a makeshift village that housed several families and hundreds of men from different countries and
cultures. There was a restrained fear about foreigners, my mother warned me sternly about stranger danger, not to
get in strange cars, not to speak to strangers, not to accept lollies or gifts from any one we did not know. Although
the government tried to reassure Australians that skilled post-war immigrants were necessary for the electricity needs
for New South Wales and our country was well protected from undesirable émigrés, my mother’s Anglocentric
sensibilities were roused.

In my remote alpine world, I became infatuated by the story of the beautiful princess who became queen, as a child it
was a charming fairy tale. Queen Elizabeth II was crowned in spectacular style in Westminster Abbey after the
death of her father King George VI in 1952. My mother and grandmother provided me with a constant source of
magazines and beautiful colour picture books of her family, her Coronation, her antipodean tour of Empire and, her
gorgeous gowns.

Yet in reality, Australian’s awareness reflected the British Empire’s ideology of cultural concepts and dominance. In
its short history of colonialism, federation and the White Australian Policy, Australia’s inconsistencies towards
difference was highlighted internationally as Melbourne prepared for the 1956 Olympic Games. Global interests
focused on Australia’s Indigenous peoples and the International Human Rights Agreement, while Australian citizens
argued the legitimacy of the 1901 policies of a White Australia.

This is an example of historical post-war attitudes directed to migrant minorities from the non-Western world; it is
also a thread of discourse that continues to engage with prejudiced xenophobic and contemptuous attitudes toward
strangers and people from different countries or cultures in contemporary Australian society. Here I have introduced a palimpsest of issues, teasing out underlying implications of colonialism, sovereignty, and racism germane to this research. These are critical issues considered in this research and in the design, recruiting, and interviewing methods of this study.

I gained degrees in visual arts as a mature age student. The aim of my 2005 Master of Arts project was to transform perceptions of Islamic culture by means of collaboration. This occurred by working with artists from diverse cultural backgrounds while considering the human aspects and responsibilities within the cross-cultural spectrum. My art work was exhibited at the University of Wollongong campus, and at an exhibition at the Dubai campus in the United Arab Emirates. My interest in working across cultural boundaries, prompted an invitation to visit an Afghan orphanage in 2005 (a privately funded trip). This then led to an exhibition of Australian art in Afghanistan in 2011. After visiting Afghanistan, I was shocked at the residual effects of war; I was compelled by the noticeable gender inequality to expand on strengthening the interaction between Christians and Muslims in contemporary Australian society and I was drawn to the individual oral histories of Afghan Muslim women forced to re-locate to live in Australia.

Memoirs: An eye-witness account of the residue of war post-Taliban 2005 Kabul, Afghanistan

I define what I call the residue of warfare with a first-person report of post-Taliban, Afghanistan that depicts the visual landscape in Kabul. The following is a narrative about my private, self-funded trip to Afghanistan in 2005 that motivated an emotional response and informed a systemic reading of relevant issues. Here, I provide a significant glimpse of the visible traces of cultural and political conflict in post-Taliban Kabul.

This was my first time in Kabul. I was eager to see as much as I could; the city was lively, and the traffic chaotic and noisy. Strikingly, there was no water in the Kabul River that runs through the centre of the city; after years of drought, dust, and intense winds, the river bed was layered with debris - fragments of day-to-day life that had been destroyed or broken into pieces, trapped and faded in muddied cavities. Nothing could have prepared me for what I saw in Kabul, particularly when the women lifted their veils. I met poverty-stricken, internally displaced refugees. I met mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters taking refuge at an Afghan orphanage from the misery and residue of war, those portrayed in the Western media most often as the faceless, veiled, and covered women of Afghanistan. They were young women with small children and babies, filled with a sense of loss, bereft of menfolk, living a miserable
existence. It was very apparent from my first day that women were absent from the city landscape apart from the billowing blue shapes squatting or standing on the side of the roadways, begging (Fig. 3).

Our party was travelling out to the suburbs to visit a local family, yet the most striking thing I noticed was the grave sites on the side of the roads, in the parks, at the end of streets: anywhere I looked there were grave sites. Sometimes they were just a pile of rubble with a faded green rag attached to a pole or stick, as seen in the foreground of the image (Fig. 4). Occasionally there were graves with a rickety lacy iron fence or sometimes a simple headstone. In any direction, I looked there were grave sites. It became a source of strange interest to me, a sad reminder of the unimaginable loss and the insidious nature of warfare, imprinted on my memory. All across Kabul, in the main thoroughfares, public spaces and in the nooks and crannies of the city of Kabul, people buried their dead. I got a sense of the substantial numbers of Afghan men, women, and children killed in conflict. I could physically see the immense personal, and societal losses Afghan people had suffered during decades of conflict.
Buildings throughout the city were damaged and empty from the days of indiscriminate bombing during the Russian occupation. Discarded Russian tanks lay rusting on the side of the road and in river and creek beds. Shops were abandoned and riddled with bullet holes from when the mujahedeen and the Taliban had engaged in ferocious hand-to-hand combat.
The following day our party was driving to a local orphanage, but on the way, we were shocked to see numerous tent cities (Fig. 5). These were the living quarters of the internally displaced people of Afghanistan. People who had returned from Pakistan and other countries after the Taliban had been defeated only to find they had lost everything; their homes had been destroyed; they were unable to gain employment, and many women had lost their men folk.

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Our Afghan host stopped at one of the tent cities and took us in to introduce us to a woman she knew. The cloying smell of poverty - the smell of unwashed clothing, of illness, of spoiling food and rotting garbage - was overpowering. I was taken aback, I suddenly realised these people had no conveniences, no water, and no electricity. Their hands and faces were like leather, ingrained with grime. I was embarrassed, ashamed, uncomfortable, guilty, and horrified; I was completely overwhelmed. As I looked around, I could see the bombed-out remains of mud brick homes and in the distance, majestically overlooking such extreme poverty, was the well-known Kabul InterContinental Hotel (Fig. 5). Foreigners and Western journalists had previously stayed there until June 2011 when suicide bombers killed 21 guests and some members of the Taliban. The image serves to stress the extremes of Afghanistan.

There were two women, related I assumed, and three school-aged children who were running around and came as soon as they saw Westerners. The women invited us into their tent to have tea, as is the Afghan custom. They shared a space of maybe three metres by three metres. Their belongings were bundled up, piled high in the corner; we could not
fit in the space yet this was where five of them lived in summer and in winter when there is often a metre of snow. They had curtained off a small space facing the main road immediately outside the makeshift canvas dwelling with an array of twigs and tree branches. In this cramped area, they had a cooking fire of sorts squeezed in next to their toilet. It smelt like excrement. I wanted to vomit, and I could feel my stomach heaving. I wandered off and waited near the car, mortified that I was unable to accept their offer of tea, mortified that people must live in such circumstances, mortified that these women didn’t seem to matter, mortified that the rest of the world was somewhat unaware and seemingly largely unconcerned of the dire circumstances that Afghan women find themselves in, just as I was before I came to Kabul.

We continued onto the orphanage. We were all silent dealing in our own ways with the poverty we had witnessed. As we approached the orphanage our spirits lifted, and we were eager to meet some of the widows and 60 street kids who had previously been homeless. They were mostly orphan children, whose lives had a dramatic turnaround because of the financial support the Director of the NGO received from Australian communities. The women and children are now part of a large family. (Fig. 6) gives an idea of life in the orphanage at meal times. A large plastic cloth is placed on the ground, the food is placed in the centre of the cloth, and everyone sits around scooping the food up with local fresh bread. Day-to-day, the widowed women supervise the younger children while the older children go to school. The orphanage provides refuge from the miserable scenes our group had encountered earlier, and provides a place of safety for a few fortunate widows and orphans, a place to heal, and recover from unimaginable loss.
Experiences from my trip to Afghanistan enabled me to see a vastly different picture to that depicted in Western mass media. For this reason, I focus on exploring visual representations of Afghan women and, in this context, my study fuses the theoretical with the two visual images described earlier to investigate - What is the reality behind the visual representation of the veiled Afghan woman in the blue burqa, and how do Afghan women recount their experience of cultural and political warfare now that they reside in Australia?
Chapter One:
Laying bare the prejudices across
cultural boundaries
Chapter One: Laying bare the prejudices across cultural boundaries

My little granddaughter demanded my attention. ‘Granny’, she said, ‘why don’t people like Muslims?’ I was shocked; I looked at her sad eyes and replied, ‘Well, I love you.’ She smiled at me as if that was all that mattered. My heart went out to my beautiful Muslim granddaughter and I wondered about others like her who felt excluded because of the current oratory of the Muslim Other.²

The research imperative

My investigation is an attempt to learn more about Afghan women, and their individual history of warfare, trauma and displacement, to critically explore the intersections of patriarchy, gender violence and ethnicity for veiled Afghan women now living in Australia. To examine these issues, narrow the study and answer the research question in some depth, I devised the following primary and sub questions:

What is the reality behind the visual representation of the veiled Afghan woman in the blue burqa, and how do Afghan women recount their experience of cultural and political warfare now that they reside in Australia?

a) What are the residual or after effects of war experienced by Afghan women?
b) What forced Afghan women to leave their home and family?
c) What difficulties do the participating Afghan women experience in Australia?
d) How does nineteenth century Orientalist image and the theory of Orientalism play into the anti-Muslim rhetoric of Australians?

² My granddaughter was in primary school at the time. She is now at university studying international affairs.
The research questions were designed to shine a critical light on the stereotypical visual images of Afghan women in the Australian mass media, to illuminate a deeper understanding of the violence many Afghan women experienced, and the many levels of gender inequality that is not often told to those outside Afghanistan.

Introduction

Concerned about Australians’ perceptions of Muslims, my research emphasises how visual representations of veiled Afghan women were strategized, facilitating the objectification of Afghan women as the face of terrorism in Australian society. This is due in part to prejudiced government rhetoric, fuelled by local media and ignited by the events of 11th September 2001. The Muslim population was foregrounded in Australia, and elsewhere in the world, after 11th September 2001. This coincided with increased images of burqa-clad Afghan women in the popular media. Post 11th September, the Australian media continued to profile the Muslim presence in Australia, which was presented often uncritically and as a relatively new phenomenon. Australian born, Susan Carland (2017), a lecturer at Monash University National Centre for Australian Studies, claims that Islam is the most discoursed religion in the Western world, “in both media and society, and, after terrorism, the plight of Muslim women is probably the most controversial topic of debate” (p. 5). She suggests Western feminism is often coupled to the veil, “with the expressed desire to rescue the Muslim woman, even if against her will” (p. 14). She gives an insider’s view of the intersections that face Muslim women caught “between patriarchy and racism” suggesting the double bind of patriarchy and racism fastens them in ways that silence and marginalize them. Carland’s dissertation thus projects Muslim women as hyper-visible, despite their silence, especially when jihad and terrorism are in the headlines. My granddaughter’s question reflects this hyper-visibility.

Before I address my granddaughter’s anxiety, “Why don’t people like Muslims?” I define the scope of the topic under discussion and elaborate on the research approaches used to investigate it, namely orientalism, feminism and intersectionality. I examine contemporary and historical racial attitudes in Australia to illustrate how historic Anglocentric privilege advantaged the Australian imperative
at the expense of diversity. Indeed, Bielefeld (2010) claims that “racism is inherent in Australia’s colonial culture which is reinforced through the political-legal system” (p. 16).

The perception of Muslim Afghan women is nebulous in Australia
For many Australians, the Muslim culture is informed by depictions and commentary in mainstream media and Islam is a nebulous concept. Afghanistan’s ethnic and political conflicts have tended to be presented, and viewed, as the products of a backward, unenlightened or violent people, or of a religion that promotes violence. “That there might be some reasonable and explicable causes – for which the West bears some responsibility – does not rate a mention”. (Sparrow, 2005, p, 68).

Nearly 40 years ago, in 1979, and up until 1989, Soviet Russia became actively involved in domestic and political affairs in Afghanistan but failed to procure widespread support for their communist socialist reforms (Sparrow, 2005 pp. 29-30). It was the Taliban regime, and the events of 11th September 2001 that magnified the political and ethnic persecution of Muslims worldwide that foregrounded the plight of displaced peoples and Afghan refugees in Australia.

My personal observation is Australians’ knowledge regarding Muslim culture is vague; this was evident to me in talk-back radio and the racist social commentary after the attacks on the American Twin Towers were debated vigorously. Fear spilled over and anti-Muslim attitudes were debated from an Orientalist position, a legacy of colonialism and the White Australia Policy. At the same time, popular media conducted surveys of whether America should or should not bomb Afghanistan (Bush, 2002). Our Prime Minister of the day, Howard, was in America and in a short space of time he managed to orchestrate the Tampa affair3 - the unauthorised arrival of refugees - and integrate Australia into the new hegemony of “the world’s first ‘hyper-power’, the US” (Manne, 2006, p. 3).

3 Also, known as the Children Overboard affair, this was an Australian political controversy involving public allegations by Howard government ministers in October 2001, in the lead up to federal elections. Howard used the un-authorised arrival of asylum seekers to his advantage (Sparrow. 2005, p. 65) ...
Defining the residue of warfare

The participating women’s stories are an indicator of the mass exodus of Afghans to Pakistan and Iran during the 1980s and 1990s conflicts; they are women who qualify under the ‘Status of Refugees’; women who traversed and suffered from the enduring effects of cultural and political warfare in Afghanistan - what was left of homes and families after random bomb attacks, hand-to-hand combat and suicide bombers. The devastation I saw firsthand in Kabul and the Panjshir Valley was only a small overview of the country-wide obliteration of urbanisation, institutions and villages as well as national infrastructure. The magnitude of destruction impedes the basic structures necessary for day-to-day operations, including public services, water, energy, communications and transport; this external material destruction compounds the internal and personal issues of loss and grief, income, emotional anxiety, poverty and malnutrition. My thesis thus challenges the stereotypical depictions in the Western mass media and the pretence of dominating discourses of liberating Afghan women (Butler, 2003) that overlook the immensity of loss and the demise of family compounds. I ask, as Butler suggests “what pain and grief these images cover over and derealize” (p. 143) to justify Western complicity in the West’s ‘wars on terror’.

The following portrayal of qualitative research by Denzin and Lincoln (1998; 2000; 2011) highlights the mode of research that, psychologically speaking, gives us passage to another part of the world, and insights into what others are experiencing.

Defining the field of qualitative research and the challenges of working with dual paradigms

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) characterise qualitative researchers as “consisting of groups of globally dispersed persons who are attempting to implement a critical interpretive approach that will help them (and others) make sense of the terrifying conditions that define daily life at the first decade of this new century” (p. xii). These groups of researchers work at both the centre and the margins of the emerging communities that criss-cross boundaries and disciplines. To paraphrase Kinchelelo (2001 p. 687), they are bricoleurs who explore the accepted stereotype interpretations in innovative and unanticipated contexts. As an interpretative bricoleur of sorts, I recognise that research is an
interactive process, informed by one’s subjective history and those participating in the research. Thus, I am researching in the present, and working against the past as I engage with a politically charged and confronting future to make sense of and offer a contemporary (re)interpretation of images of veiled women.

The theoretical rationale for my research is informed by aspects of Orientalism and feminism, linking into the theory of intersectionality. Orientalism is understood as the representation of Asia in a stereotypical way that characterises a colonialisn approach. I draw on Edward Said’s 1979 study, first by qualifying anti-colonial issues and second, by elucidating the multifaceted issues that arise from a heterogeneous notion of nation and objectives. In his work Said explained how Orientalists regarded the Orient as a place of mystic religiosity and irrational backwardness. As a Christian-Palestinian-American scholar, Said’s discourse Orientalism (1979) became a major critique of Eastern culture and thus, the foundational work on which post-colonial feminist theory developed. Said’s work opened the pathway to the research paradigm of intersectionality to illuminate the inherent, hidden political agendas that underpin Orientalism’s beliefs of cultural supremacy (Said, 1993). Orientalism and the Orientalist are important distinctions in my study to explain the stereotypical representation of the Muslim Other (Fig 1 & Fig 2) and the silencing of their female voices, as explained more extensively in Chapters Two and Five.

Knapp’s work (2005) is a pertinent example of how two paradigms work in concert. Strengthened by her engagement with an intersectionality perspective, Knapp claims that travelling in the day-to-day sense usually depicts a holiday spirit, leaving home, discovering new experiences and seeing new cultures. However, travelling has been transformed by a shift in the globalised economy and revolutionary developments. To quote Knapp (2005), in a “culture deeply altered by a globalizing economy and culture ... people, goods, weapons, risks, information and ideas can move farther and faster than ever”, securing and restricting transnational exchange (p. 251). This is particularly true in Afghanistan and in this research intersectionality works in the same vein to “render[s] more visible the uneven ... notions of exile, displacement and migration” (p. 251) in the mass media images of veiled women as one face of terror in Australia.
But first, it is crucial to explain how disparate paradigms can work together in my research as some may see it as unusual that an Australian Christian woman would research Afghan Muslim women. My positionality is germane to my culture, ethnicity, and gender and my epistemological positioning is aligned to the immigration of my extended family. My standpoint is constructed and reconstructed depending on the social context and my environment. It is not surprising then, that my position is in a perpetual state of flux as I shift from insider to outsider. I am an insider within my immediate family yet also a foreigner, or outsider, in some senses, within my husband’s Greek-ness, my daughter’s Turkish Muslim family, and with my Iranian, Pakistani and Afghan friends.

Inevitability, being a middle-class Anglo-Celtic woman within a cross-cultural family in Australia collapses cultural and social divides and opens spaces for multiple voices, diverse human understandings and collective narratives. This glimpse into my point of view and how I interpret things in the world mirrors the subjective-objective reality that Heron and Reason (1997) pursued. In more specific terms, I am mindful of the shifting characterisation between the subjective terror of war that Afghan women were subjected and exposed to, and the enormous loss and grief, as opposed to the objective of the war on terror, as instructed by the American government.

To take the subject-objective a little further, using multiple voices as Buitelaar (2006), Lather and Smithies (1997), Richardson (2010) and Sword (2012) suggest, provides a detour from the academic voice. In my research, the women’s multiple voices convey a snapshot of their place and lives. While images of women wearing hijab in Australia can be interpreted as contributing to the stereotypical concept of Muslim oppression my research examines and illustrates how wearing a headscarf or hijab is one-way Afghan women engender and project their unspoken female voice, thereby signifying a dialogue that remonstrates how their personal religious, ethnic and gender identification shows respect for the history of the veil.

The participating women have their own personal agenda and considerations; this is markedly true with women whose community profile traverses two cultures. Their Australian voice is often spoken in monologue, however, on the appointed interview day, the Afghan voice was a pirouetting dialogue. Metaphorically, the women’s voices, like a dance, move either a step to the left or a step
to the right. Their stories go backward and forward taking their listeners with them, giving their audience a glimpse of their Afghan culture and their concepts of religious and gender identification. The parallels, sandwiched between two cultures sees the women giving voice to both individual and religious values they hold dear. The power shifts in gender relations that inhabit the women’s stories complicate matters and make it difficult to untangle their profile in the wider community in which a Muslim woman becomes other than, or more clearly, a ‘non-person’ or a nobody in the misogynous social culture of Afghanistan.

The women’s stories and positioning thus reminds me of the work of eminent researcher Laurel Richardson; “the individual is subject of these discursive struggles for identity and for remaking memory. Because the individual is subject to multiple and competing discourses in many realms, one’s subjectivity is shifting and contradictory, not stable, fixed, rigid” (Richardson, 2010, p. 36). One of the Afghan women, for example, came to Australia by ‘boat’; the fluidity of her voice is an example of how knowledge is produced through the story teller’s choice of discourse topics and metaphor. Her emotional expression oscillates between telling the story and being in the story. Her nuances bring to attention what Richardson describes as “personal binaries (me / them, good / bad, for/ against)” (2010, p. 36). For Afghan women, telling their oral history can be uncomfortable because they are confronting horrific memories, serious ethical issues, and they are painfully aware of who they might be hurting and the consequences that might befall their families still in Afghanistan.

Different voices in my research, in part aim to resolve the tension and divisive issues between the disparate realms I explore. As the researcher, my authorial voice interchanges with my facilitating voice that encourages the participating Afghan women to record their stories while my personal voice brings another layer to the research. My personal voice, as Sword (2012, p. 37) suggests, “ascribes agency to the research” and also explains my often conversational and chatty style of authoring. Choice is not intrinsically ‘right or wrong’, therefore, I have chosen this approach to complement the Afghan women’s conversational English and privilege their voice. In doing so I chronicle a diverse universe that is not constrained by the boundaries of Anglocentric convention,
that is open to accept the validity of data narrated by Afghan women and that avoids attempts to camouflage opinion. Therefore, I engage in a direct conversation with both the Afghan Muslim women and you, the reader, using field notes verbatim, polyvocality and other modes of presentation in the following chapters.

In qualitative research, the subjective-objective reality Heron and Reason (1997) describe was influenced by Husserl’s scholarship, as “certain kinds of symbioses, certain ways the outside has of invading us and certain ways we have of meeting the invasion” (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 1). The invading and lingering images of the turmoil I experienced on my visit to Afghanistan in 2005 clarified my participatory world view and my humanity so I explicitly came to understand that I am part of the whole rather than a separate part. My subjective sense of what was encountered thereby became an opening that legitimised my collaborative inquiry with Afghan women to research their experiences before and after they re-located to Australia. This involves an extended epistemology, as counselled by Heron and Reason (1997, p. 4), where “a knower participates in the known, and articulates a world in at least four independent ways: experimental, presentational, propositional, and practical”. This is termed critical subjectivity.

Experimental knowing, for example, involves direct encounters, face-to-face interviews, acknowledgement of feelings and imaginings, and visual insight. This is mostly self-explanatory, but in the case of the oral histories of Afghan women there is a need to appreciate/have some understanding of the former complexity of events that saw Afghan women relocate to Australia. To experience is to participate and to participate is to encounter, “hence experiential reality is always subjective-objective” (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 3).

Presentational knowing fashions the experiential knowing by expanding the spatio-temporal belonging to both space and time. As Heron and Reason (1997, p. 5) state, “it is evident in an intuitive grasp of the significance of our resonance with and imagining as this grasp is symbolised in graphic, plastic, musical, vocal and verbal art forms”. Putting an extended epistemology into practice means finding a way to validate the kind of finding out that I believe can be known about
Afghan women now living in Australia. Learning from experience in Afghanistan and learning within my relationship with Afghan women, woman-to-woman, creates an epistemology of poise where subjective-objective learners are engaged with the dynamics of transformative learning.

Propositional knowledge is knowledge by *a priori* knowledge, and explicates awareness. “It is expressed in statements and theories ... carried by presentational forms—the sounds or visual shapes of the spoken or written word—and are ultimately grounded in our experiential articulation of a world” (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 5). This means that *a priori* justification is comparable to my first-hand experience in Afghanistan where the residue of decades of conflict created a clarifying awareness of the value, scope, and legitimacy of my own epistemology and values. Therefore, this empirical study is *a posteriori* knowledge, based on reasoning from known facts and past events rather than by making assumptions or predictions.

Practical knowing, as Heron and Reason (1997) claim, “is knowing how to do something, demonstrated in a skill or competence” (p. 5). People who experience diverse family relationships grasp more intuitively the principles and values of the other’s worlds. The nuances of culture and the values of being are respected by virtue of what they are, enabling a balance between people of “hierarchy, cooperation, and autonomy” (p. 8). Families are often the epitome of the participatory worldview and I agree with Heron and Reason (1997) who claim, “we learn more profoundly about our worlds when we are more interested in enhancing them with excellence of action than in learning about them” (p. 5). Practical knowing is being conscious during action and is a process that refines the arts of kindness, concern, and tolerance, even amid passionate disagreements.

Heron and Reason (1997) advocate appropriately embracing the rich diversity of human experience and individual values. The congruence of the four aspects of knowing listed above relates to the extended epistemology, prior forms of knowledge and collaborative inquiry approach of this study. They capture how my personally constructed knowledge about how the world works and the/my truth are assumptions that impact us and society. To comply with the above issues of a participatory inquiry paradigm, the recruiting and interviewing processes necessitated direct encounters with
Afghan women to acknowledge their circumstances. My time in Afghanistan provided an insightful grasp of the impact political conflict has had on Afghan women now living in Australia. In a comparable manner, the practicality of a long-term relationship with post-war immigrants of Orthodox and Muslim origin provided me with an awareness and assurance of being with the Other.

The power of Orientalist visual representations

I have interwoven images of veiled women as a visual narrative throughout the text; rather than exoticising Afghan women, I highlight how images of the veiled Afghan woman have been framed as a tool of war, and used as a tool of racism.

One sense of ‘to be framed’ means to be subjected to a con, to a tactic by which evidence is orchestrated so to make a false accusation appear true. Some power manipulates the terms of appearances and one cannot break out of the frame: one is framed, which means one is accused, but also judged in advance without valid evidence— (Judith Butler, 2009, p. 11)

The visual politicisation of the veiled Afghan woman suggests a complex and contradictory merging of political strategies by Western hegemony to camouflage complicity. To paraphrase Razack (1998), I argue that as white Australians we need to theorise about ourselves and how we act in the world instead of framing visual narratives to construct ourselves as innocent of any complicity in our imperial, colonial, and racialised domination of the Other.

The power of Streeton’s Orientalist visual representations

In some ways, Sir Arthur Streeton’s painting (Fig. 1) is a visual metaphor for the discourse of the veil: his historical representation confronts our contemporary Western assumptions about the Muslim Other (Ahmed, 2003 and 1992). In it I recognised a precursor to the plethora of popular media images since 11th September 2001 of the Afghan woman in a burqa. The significance of this juxtaposition (Figs. 1 and 2) brought to mind Streeton’s oversimplified representation of a Muslim woman that has been further perpetuated by images that defined veiled women during the Afghan
conflict. Streeton’s work offers a direct testimony about his Anglocentric world. His painting tells us more than the literature of his time, and is a profound work that allows us to share his experience of cultural difference in Australian before Federation in 1901.

Objectification of veiled women
The nineteenth century scene in ancient Cairo where a veiled Muslim woman came to be the subject of a painting by an Australian male landscape artist intrigued me. Like a palimpsest manuscript that recovers a priori knowledge, Streeton’s painting of Fatma is a faded narrative written a century ago that brings to our attention the consequence of dominant representations of the Muslim Other. The term pentimento, defines the tangible existence of the veiled Fatma Habibi, and depicts the legacy of past histories that are now integrated and speak within the discursive discourses of Neo-Orientalism and the ‘discourse of the veil’ (Ahmed, 2003; Lewis, 2004). Specifically, the painting of Fatma Habibi shows colonialist Orientalist attitudes towards the objectification of Muslim women in the late nineteenth century. Art Historians Benjamin (2003) and Farahani (2007), whose work envelops aspects of postcolonial theories, diaspora, critical race and whiteness studies, concede that the Orientalist genre of the Muslim woman from the Middle East serves the dual purpose of portraying the Muslim Other as the oppressed woman and/or depicting the exotic and mysterious woman. The later echoes Nochlin’s (1989) claims of the Orientalist’s fantasy of possessing women’s bodies as being a flight of the imagination about white men’s superiority and “a standard topos of Orientalist ideology” (p. 35).

Spivak (1996), an Indian scholar and feminist, studies the colonised subject and asks, “can the subaltern speak” (p. 188) from outside the dominant hegemonic culture? Her query begs the concern that Fatma is represented through the painterly strokes of Streeton who has assigned no position of articulation for Fatma, the Muslim Other. Arguably, Streeton’s public cultural and political alliances help to explain and explore the boundaries his painting depicts of east and west, inclusion and exclusion, insider and outsider yet although these relationships unavoidably include people, they also have boundaries that exclude others.
In the spirit of pentimento, the painting of Fatma Habibi provides the opportunity to raise questions about Streeton’s nineteenth-century society and how it compares to our own contemporary world. This seemingly voiceless painting of a veiled woman has shaped my own attitudes towards this research for over a decade, and as a silent image it offers a flexible framework for participants from Afghanistan to present their veiled voices and, a springboard to articulate loss and grief, the tangible terrors of war and to explore other questions; What does a small portrait of a covered woman by an Australian landscape artist in 1897 say to Australians today? What does it tell us? What do we see? What does it imply in our world? Arguably, Streeton’s Anglo-centric insight and artistic paradigm created a painting of a veiled woman vitalised by colonialist sovereign powers, that, juxtaposed with a plethora of more contemporary images of the veiled Afghan woman, continues the nexuses of othering. In the same manner, we ‘see’ the Afghan woman behind the blue burqa depicted in images in contemporary media coverage and ask, “Who is she?” What social conditions contributed to Afghan women and their families fleeing their familiar surroundings? What is Australia’s association with veiled women in the twentieth century? Streeton’s painting of Fatma Habibi is thus an entry point for this research on dominant representations of the veiled Muslim Other in contemporary Australia.

For me, Streeton’s Orientalist painting of Fatma Habibi also provided a critical lens through which to analyse aspects of post-colonialism as it relates to Orientalism and cultural difference. Edward Said himself has:

> accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, ‘mind’, destiny, and so on ... the phenomenon of Orientalism as I study it here deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient ... despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a ‘real’ Orient. (1979, pp. 1–3, 5).

In the same manner, anti-Muslim sentiment in Australia is often verbalised by individuals who have never been exposed to people who practise the Muslim faith. My research considers the internal
consistency of Orientalism and requires an analysis of the cultural constructs affected by the patriarchal biases perceived in Australian contemporary society. My internal consistency can be explained by my position as an Australian Christian woman and the areas of ignorance I have about Afghan women living in Australia. Therefore, I am interested in understanding what Afghan women have lost as immigrants and refugees and what they have gained by relocating to Australia. This commitment is proclaimed in the research question - *What is the reality behind the visual representation of the veiled Afghan woman in the blue burqa, and how do Afghan women recount their experience of cultural and political warfare now that they reside in Australia.*

**Muslim sentiment in Australia**

The 1990s were a turbulent time in Australia, in terms of anti-Muslim and inflammatory rhetoric directed at immigration and refugee-ism. Pre-and post the events of 11th September 2001, little changed. In political terms, this is best defined by Maley (2001), who claims that “faced with the arrival by boat of asylum seekers from Iraq and Afghanistan, Australian political leaders have found inflammatory ways of scorning them” (p. 5). As the twentieth century ended, Australia received a greater volume of applicants from asylum claimants. Maley (2001) cites statistics from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) that verified in the first year of the new millennium “the total number of ‘boat people’ arriving in Australia from 1989 on was 8,289 of whom 1,141 were Afghans” (p. 5). This means that over 11 years Australia accepted approximately one hundred Afghan asylum seekers per year.

The Afghan population in the 2011 Australian Census recorded approximately 28,500, an increase of 70.7 per cent from the 2006 Census. More recent statistics published by the Immigration Department (Karlsen, 2014), reveal that during the 2013–14 fiscal year, some 6,500 visas were granted to refugees abroad who had applied to be resettled into Australia. Most of these people fled persecution and included 2,530 refugees from Afghanistan. Contrarywise, the statistics of asylum seekers accepted into Australia are often calculatingly censored. This is explained by Sparrow (2005) who claims data are “deliberately obscured by the government, its significance consequently marginalised by the media, and thus missed by the public” (p. 10).
After 11th September 2001, discrimination and vilification directed at Muslims in Australia was amplified, and people readily identifiable as Muslim were the targets of racist violence and abuse (Dunn and Nelson, 2011). There was little understanding that Muslim propriety in Afghanistan requires women to be protected and sheltered from un-related men or that the hijab and burqa have a long tradition; women have worn them for centuries to conform to Islamic standards of modesty, to cover the head and neck, the wrist and ankles although it allows the face, hands and feet to remain uncovered. Women take pride in their hand stitched burqa’s; coloured burqas denote their marital-status, social and sometimes tribal positioning; the hand embroidered embellishment around the face and hands is a feature of pride. The rise of the mujahedeen however meant coercion by baton wielding religious police saw the personalised burqa substituted with a cheap synthetic sky-blue material that covers a woman from top to bottom and renders her invisible and de-individualised (Fig. 2).

A fact often overlooked, was that many Afghan women were forced to gather their children and flee under the shadow of war. There was no time to collect identification, family valuables or family photographs, therefore keepsakes and treasures were left behind. The vulnerability and the threat of death for Afghan women in those circumstances was an principal characteristic that helped to inform my research question, as defined under the Research Design in Chapter Three. A principle of the research design was to ask questions in a normal day-to-day conversation and this enabled me to enquire about the masculinised Afghan society. I was also curious about how Afghan women might navigate religious ideology in Australia whilst maintaining their own cultural integrity.

Once they arrived in Australia, Afghan and Muslim women who wore the hijab, niqab or chador risked “instinctual abhorrence for the traditional Islamic mores” (Carland 2017, p. 14). The late Mr Kemal Ismen OAM, a family member by marriage, spoke of marginalisation and racial-

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4 OAM, the Medal of the Order of Australia, is awarded for service worthy of recognition.
discrimination by way of omission or inference; his wisdom resonates with Dunn and Nelson, (2011), where he defined marginalisation as not feeling important and being excluded from participating in government decision-making. As the Chairman of the Islamic Council of New South Wales (ICNSW), he was speaking on behalf of Australian Muslims.

In Australia the terms ‘racism’ and ‘discrimination’ are frequently used interchangeably, therefore there is a need to understand each word so that societal problems germane to Muslim refugees or immigrant experiences can be better comprehended. The imperatives of racism are defined as: “1. the belief that races have distinctive cultural characteristics determined by hereditary factors and that this endows some races with an intrinsic superiority over others. 2. abusive or aggressive behaviour towards members of another race on the basis of such a belief” (Hanks, 1979, p. 1203).

Discrimination n. “1. unfair treatment of a person, racial group, minority, etc.; action based on prejudice. 2. subtle appreciation in matters of taste. 3. The ability to see fine distinctions and differences” (Hanks, 1979, p.422-3).

The distinction between these two words is evident in the first few words of each definition:

- Racism, the belief ...
- Discrimination, unfair treatment ...

The Australian Human Rights Commission website (2014) states “Discrimination is more action orientated therefore; verbal abuse, taking advantage of cultural vulnerability, and excluding because of cultural and racial difference are acts of discrimination based on race is said to be racial discrimination” (n.d.). To take this characterisation further, the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (RDA) deems that racial discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably, or not given the same opportunities, as others in a similar situation, because of their race, the country where they were born, their ethnic origin or their skin colour. Australian Human Rights Commission website (2014) and the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (RDA) makes it unlawful to “discriminate against a person because of his or her race, colour, descent, national origin or ethnic
origin, or immigrant status” (n.d.). This clarifies the definitions and patterns of discrimination that underpin the line of reasoning in my thesis.

The theory of feminism: the relationship between the individual and the social
My feminist approach aims, as Phoenix (2006) suggests, to “make visible the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and power interactions [that] are central to it” (p. 187). Intersectionality draws on feminist work on how women are simultaneously positioned as women and, for example, as working-class, as white, as black, as lesbian, or as educated colonial subjects to bring into focus the multiple positioning that constitutes day-to-day life and how power relations can control gender-based inequality. For example, in earlier works, as board members of the Australian National Committee on Refugee Women, Phoenix and Bartolomei (2001) acknowledge that relocation services seldom comprehend the extent of the refugee women’s survival status. Research to date has shown legal protection for women at risk is largely ‘gender blind’ and does not necessarily address the realism of women who are members of a patriarchal society, as is the case for Afghan women. These strategies have been maintained and used to rationalise the invasion and occupation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

The participating Afghan women in this research are part of the current worldwide globally displaced refugee program. Prior to 11th September, it was acceptable for the international community to keep issues in Afghanistan at arm’s length, and to deny any complicity that supported the mujahedeen Muslim warriors during the Soviet war in Afghanistan. Rawi (2004) recalls, as a member of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), discussing images of the massacre of women and being told “as the footage is very shocking, Western viewers can’t bear it so we are sorry that we can’t air it” (p. 118). Yet after the events of 11th September 2001, Western government and media channels played the same shocking images repeatedly without the permission of RAWA as justification to ‘save Afghan women’ (Abu-Lughod, 2002). This is an example of how the situation in Afghanistan has been politicalised at the cost of Afghan women, to gain support for what Butler (2003) calls the ‘war on terror’.
Intersectionality

The names of Chicken Street and Flower Street are a legacy of the 1970s Hippie Trail in Kabul, they are so named because in the past, chickens and flowers were sold in those particular streets and the landmark names still operate in the main shopping precinct in Kabul today. The title of this thesis, “At the Intersection of Patriarch Street, Flower Street and Neo-Orientalist Lane: The oral histories of Afghan women living in Australia”, originated from my personal experience in Kabul and the philosophy of Crenshaw (1991), who describes her theory of intersectionality in terms of a busy city-street intersection:

Intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a minority group ... tries to navigate the main crossing in the city ... The main highway is ‘racism road’. One cross street can be Colonialism, then Patriarchy Street... She has to deal not only with one form of oppression but with all forms, those named as road signs, which link together to make a double, a triple, multiple, a many layered blanket of oppression (Yuval-Davis, 2006 p. 196).

This is an appropriate analogy for my research, and the inspiration for my thesis title. From my visits to Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan in 2005 and 2011, I can visualise the juncture of Chicken Street (Fig. 7) and Flower Street (Fig. 8), in my mind’s eye, I can see the busy street crossings
Figure 7. Chicken Street, Kabul 2011. Digital image Annette Tzavaras

Figure 8. Flower Street, Kabul 2011. Digital image Annette Tzavaras
So what connection does Flower Street have to the issues of patriarchy and orientalism discussed in my thesis? For Westerners, not used to open drains, water carriers, squawking chickens, poverty, and child beggars, the dreary, squalid all-male landscape in most of the streets of Shahr-e-Naw (meaning new city) in Kabul can be depressing. In contrast, and surprisingly, as you turn into Flower Street, you see bursts of colour and smell a heady fragrance from a row of flower merchants; gladioluses in the softest hues, iris flowers in dark purples, petunias in the brightest colours, and the reddest roses. Each shop has beautiful floral bouquets tied with delicate ribbons adorned with sparkling diamantés. There are signs of a woman’s touch everywhere, but there are no women in sight.

I engage with Crenshaw’s 1991 theory of intersectionality to tease out the largely unconsidered interlocking systems that complicate life for Afghan women. The theory of intersectionality has been used in a variety of research projects: one interesting exploration by Marjo Buitlaar (2006) is an empirical study that offers a transnational feminist perspective of the different interrelated issues that confront the Muslim Other. She analyses the life story of an adult daughter of Moroccan migrant workers in the Netherlands. She draws on theories of dialogism and polyphony to contextualise her argument by composing several melodic conversations to show the narrator speaking from shifting I-positions within each melody.

In Buitlaar’s narratives, the daughter’s choice to wear a hijab or a headscarf combines the religious and political views in her story (one melody) with her more hesitant female voice (another melody). Her narrative is the product of a skilful orchestration conducted in her Muslim voice. This metaphor of orchestration demonstrates how the narrator identifies with religion, ethnicity, and gender as a symphony of several musical scores framed in a melodious optimism. Buitlaar’s (2006) intersectionality theory-based research has the potential to animate, inform, empower and/or even infuriate those who seek to repudiate the wearing of the veil or headscarf.

The concept of intersectionality allows the incorporation of feminist theory with racial, ethnic, class, and cultural differences. It is an important way of
understanding the organization of society and could be used to achieve social justice. (Dill, 2009, p. 65).

Intersectionality, as described by Dill (2009), is a way to comprehend how society is categorised. Social justice, for example, is when “we advance social justice when we remove barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability” (World Day of Social Justice, 2016, p.1).

To understand racism and disrupt prejudices towards coloured women in America, Crenshaw (1989) developed a ‘Black’ feminist critique of feminism to illustrate the problematic consequences or inequality to combine “race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis” (p. 57). She was looking for the duality of patterns that shaped the structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against women. Although Crenshaw’s (1989) focus was on African-American women, this was inspired by the significance stemming from the criticism that white feminists professed to speak for women of colour through the term of ‘woman’.

Crenshaw’s more recent (1991) research includes immigrant women and cultural complications, particularly for Asian women, who she suggests often live in extended family situations where the dynamics of intersectionality impact heavily on immigrant women who are socially and economically the most marginalised. When such burdens converge, Crenshaw (1991) claims that intervention strategies “based solely on the experience of women who do not share the same class or race background will be of limited help to women who because of race and class face different obstacles” (p. 1246). This calls to mind women from Afghanistan where violence is disproportionately high when coupled with ancient traditional practices of patriarchy, gender inequality, and tribal domination. In this sense, intersectionality is less about cultural difference, e.g.

Christian and Muslim, and more about considering the experience of Afghan women at the intersection of inflexible patriarchy practices complicated by Western political warfare.

In Australia, for example, Afghan women, and more frequently veiled Muslim women, cope with prejudice and opinion shaped from stereotypes coloured by the fear of Islamic ideology. Then again, Muslim communities add richness and multiplicity in Australian society, but Afghan women are confronted with a shift in patriarchal and cultural practices as they deal with the diversity of Australian Muslim communities, as well as Australians’ perceptions of Muslims.

Thesis outline

This thesis is made up of nine chapters. The introduction, Chapter One: Laying bare the prejudices across cultural boundaries begins with a Foreword that chronicles my personal narratives to set the scene and the topic of research. It includes a personal affirmation that justifies the research obligations. Chapter one goes on to define the residue of warfare and the Muslim sentiment in Australia and to rationalise the importance of using Streeton’s Orientalist visual image and visual images of veiled Afghan woman to address the core research questions that progress and develop the overall argument in this thesis At the intersection of Patriarch Street, Flower Street and Neo-Orientalist Lane: the oral histories of Afghan women living in Australia.

Following on from the introduction chapter, Chapter Two: Text in tandem with the visual, situates my research within the cross-disciplinary areas of social science and visual arts. This chapter acquaints the reader with aspects of visual sociology. This allows the reader to decode, interpret and challenge aspects that are critical to our past and present, and therefore our future, in contemporary society. It also brings to our attention a new visibility of Afghan women in Australia and the stereotypical scripts attached to images of burqa clad Afghan women. I reflect on the practices of visual images and representation through which Muslim women have been contradictorily constructed and hyper-visible; both as the victims of patriarchal oppression and the face of terrorism.
In Chapter Three: Study of selected academic works I analyse the existing literature theory to profile the purpose, context, and theoretical approaches taken in this research. I document the important academic literature in terms of Orientalism, and elements of post-colonial feminism as well as the theory of intersectionality to highlight that feminism seemed to focus solely on the experiences of women in Western cultures. This sets the stage to search for and examine original and ethical research by Afghan women rather than research about Afghan women. Within the broad brush strokes of exploring the Muslim Other in the Australian context, this chapter also reviews the fragmented history of Afghan Muslim cameleers. I also look at the Orientalist issue of veiled women and their representation as well as the new visibility of veiled women in contemporary Australia. This is offset by an examination of the modernising period of Afghan society, as documented by Dupree (1992), and a brief review of the tangible effects of classic patriarchy, gender segregation, and inequity relating to my research question.

Moving on to Chapter Four: Peroration of Orientalism and the Orientalist memory this chapter discourses; points made earlier but recapitulated with added emphasis. The major threads of Orientalism weave throughout my research therefore I attempt to crystalise the definition between Orientalism and the Orientalist memory. The omnipotence of this theory forms the background for postcolonial studies by highlighting a variety of imperialist assumptions which are accepted on individual, academic, and political levels to advance the covert terror war and military operations in Afghanistan.

The focus of Chapter Five: Methodology, a rationale for using an inductive qualitative approach shifts to the methods, where information about the art-based, art-enabling workshops and consent forms were discussed; issues of ethical consideration relating to the participating women’s wellbeing were also debated. This chapter also discusses the problematic issues that impeded recruitment of Afghan women. In the simplest sense, this chapter describes a qualitative methodological approach aimed to capture critical aspects of the subject under consideration, convened under an Australian code of ethics. It details the workshops in Victoria and New South Wales where the women told their stories in simple conversations, stories of conflict, tragedy, and
drama told with integrity and sometimes humour; they told of the injustice and discrimination they faced in terms of gendered violence, ethnicity, and dislocation. I also explain and describe the ethical considerations of analysing, interpreting, and writing the narrative data collected in ‘the field’.

**Chapter Six: Ordinary day-to-day conversations in unrecorded interviews** discusses the narratives of two women who for personal reasons preferred face-to-face unrecorded interviews. One woman’s oral history underlines the power of Afghan patriarchy and how her life is influenced by the male members of her family in Afghanistan. Living the Australian way of life challenges many Afghan women who are obliged to maintain the traditional practices determined by Afghan leaders from afar. The second woman’s story is significant because it describes the residue of warfare that many Afghan women have been subjected to, and is hard for Australians to imagine.

The intersection of patriarchal dominance and religious fundamentalism is the topic of **Chapter Seven: A tapestry of resistance, stories of conflict and drama**. Narrated through the oral histories of three participating Afghan women, this chapter details the places that are important to the production of knowledge in this thesis: patriarchy, ethnicity and gender. Over a craft table full of colourful threads, the women convened a lively social occasion that was culturally, safe, and sensitive. Collectively they spoke about religious fundamentalism and generational issues, they laughed and even cried as they recalled the homes and families they had left behind. They told of horrendous experiences after the Russians were forced to retreat and when hand-to-hand combat between the mujahedeen and Taliban seemed to be on their doorsteps. A story of a clandestine school brings into focus gender-based violence by the Taliban and the implications and diverse intersections of abuse as Afghan women fled possible death. This was followed by further exploitation as they sought asylum and resettlement in Australia. The retelling of the experiences of Afghan women escaping the residue of war is followed by an analysis of the social constructs in which they occurred.
Chapter Eight: At home but not home extends the previous chapter and examines the anecdote of being at home but not home. The oral history of one woman brings to attention the added complexities of living a cross-cultural life where one is often forced to abide between two cultures that contradict each other. This chapter identifies how maintaining patriarchal cultural practices is affected by relocation as well as the importance of friendships in the women’s lives. The psychology of Afghan culture is such that women follow the tradition of respecting the male head of the family: even widowed women are compelled to seek advice from their eldest son.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion and Analysis concludes the thesis; it is a reflection and review that draws together the significant findings of this work and recommendations for further research.
Chapter Two:
Text in tandem
with the visual
image
Chapter Two: Text in tandem with the visual image

Introduction

Art historians such as Benjamin (2003), Berger (1980), and D’Allena (2006) study the visual image to try and understand what the artist intended to express in their work and what art patrons might see in it. As an academic discipline, art distinguishes the aims and methods of art history from related disciplines and attempts to answer associated questions, the visual culture “examines the social, political and cultural significance of any human creation that is primarily meant to be experienced visually” (D’Allena, 2006, p. 21). Visual anthropology, visual sociology, visual arts and many other visual applications can thereby enhance the quality of research by engaging the senses. Visual sources draw on the fundamental principles of the palimpsest that brings to life voices that dominant practices have silenced. Silverman (2014) engages with Baudelaire’s noteworthy description of the palimpsest as “the way in which memories are not lost but can reappear from beneath the blanket of forgetting in which they are shrouded ... and the form they take on their return of ‘couches superpoises’ ['superimposed layers']” (p. 1). This chapter, text in tandem with visual images, adds clarity to the participants’ history and narratives (Pink, 2006, p. 36). Streeton’s Orientalist painting of Fatma Habibi lays bare the counter-culture of east and west, whilst the visual images of burqa-clad women convey the tense relationships between the invisible and hyper-visible trajectory of cultural and political conflict they depict. The following selected images allow the reader to decode, interpret and challenge aspects that are critical to our past, our present and therefore our future in an acquiescent manner.

Comparing images of a veiled woman from the past with one from the present aims to represent generational perspectives, each forged by its own time and place. Berger (1980) claims we “live in a society of comparable relations and moral value” (p. 14). I take this to mean that by drawing conclusions from history we can challenge current Australian stereotypical representations of veiled women. Therefore, I argue that the 1897 painting of Fatma Habibi took on greater significance when it reappeared in 1997 and that significance has further increased since as it provided/s an opportunity
to compare past Orientalist representations of a veiled woman with a contemporary Neo-Orientalist representation of the veiled Afghan woman (Fig. 1 & 2).

**The heightened visibility of the veiled Muslim woman in Australia**
The sudden interest in veiled Muslim women by popular media during the Afghan conflict was perplexing for many Australian Muslim women. Women from different Muslim denominations and backgrounds had to ignore dominant images in the media that depicted them as oppressed, evil and threatening in the eyes of Australians (text in tandem with the visual). The aftershock of 11th September 2001 was a time of uncertainty for Australian Muslims and their families. I personally observed my son-in-law and his extended family preparing to defend their position as Muslims in Australia. As a family, we braced ourselves for an onslaught of anti-Muslim attitudes. We were all nervous about how the diverse international Muslim world would respond to such extreme terrorism, and about the outcome for conservative Australian Muslims. As a family, we were concerned for our children in Australia and how they would be treated. The unpredictability of public rhetoric and the lack of informed, critical perspectives meant that they would have to defend their Muslim faith from a defensive position.

Fear pervaded the lives of Australians post 11th September 2001, both non-Muslims and Muslim alike. Non-Muslims feared further acts of terror and Muslims feared they would be deemed terrorists. Television programs amplified the two positions (Ramji, 2009; Butler, 2003) with the American government’s position being either “you are with us or you are with the terrorists” (Bush, 2002, p.2). Butler (2004) claims this type of rhetoric “produces the climate of fear in which to voice a certain view is to risk being branded and shamed ... to continue to voice one’s view under those conditions is not easy” (p. xix). Her extensive work about the precariousness of life was a response to the heightened aggression that followed the events of 11th September 2001. She makes the distinction between how we can be injured and injure others, defines the difference between the ‘war on terrorism’ and the ‘terror of war’, and questions how the media act upon the public and whether they charge themselves with the undertaking of structuring public opinions. These points
are important to understanding how Orientalism can introduce moral authority and sustain it as a method of control.

Post 11th September 2001, my family tuned out of talk-back radio where people made prejudiced comments about Australian Muslims, refugees, and immigrants. An example during these turbulent times was radio talk-back host Alan Jones, who focused on the veiled Muslim women (Noble, 2009). Jones went on to breach the vilification provision of the Commercial Radio Code of Practice by indiscriminately highlighting the acts of Middle Eastern youth raping women in western Sydney. Talk-back radio continued to expose racial bigotry and we were appalled at the endless negative depictions of the veiled woman in popular media. Sanctimonious posturing and deplorable attitudes towards veiled women and Muslims in general quickly surfaced. Yet these depictions and events had no connection to the Muslim women in my circle of family and friends; the only link that was visible to me was that they practised the Muslim faith.

I personally remember racism being rampant at the time and anyone who looked different was likely to become a victim of racial discrimination; this was arguably encouraged by the counterterrorism initiatives introduced by the Howard Government. Australians were asked to inform on anyone who might look suspicious. It was a contentious issue for my family because our male members would qualify as suspicious-looking. I became sensitive to the role popular media played in demonising Muslim people. Mass media representative often disregarded the residue of conflict and the grief of having to leave elderly parents in Afghanistan, of siblings being scattered around the world, and of having to leave a culture that is familiar. I wanted to better comprehend the effects of this inflammatory rhetoric and racist attitudes on Afghan Muslim women, as the Muslim Other, so that I could challenge them. The critical moments re-authored by the Afghan women’s oral histories presented later are a significant part of this research. They provide evidence of the social phenomena that supports my research and have the potential to become a multicultural educational platform within the broad context of the Muslim Other.
The representation of the Muslim Other in contemporary Australia

Australia has a history of recognised racial bias (Stevens, 2002; Scriver, 2004) and immigration restrictions initiated by the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (Willard, 1967). I am referring here to the White Australia Policy that influences the position taken by many Australians who in their lifetime recall a homogenous white Australia for nearly seven decades. Willard (1967) explains how this policy comprised various historical plans collected from the six British colonies before Federation in 1901, which intentionally favoured immigration to Australia from European countries and, above all, from Britain. This policy exemplified the enduring legacy of the nineteenth century east/west dichotomy, patterns that even today dominate the representation of the Muslim Other in contemporary Australia.

The political narrative in which images of the Muslim Other are mobilised

The argument being put forward in my thesis echoes Mackie (2012) and is comparable to Butler (2003), who claims “we might want to champion the sudden bared faces of the young Afghan women” (p.143) particularly after the American attack on Afghanistan (October 2011). To do so, we need to understand the political narrative in which images of veiled Afghan women and girls were used and ask whether the raid into Afghanistan was to save Afghan women? If we look at the images through a feminist lens, we can see how Afghan women have been portrayed as repressed through decades of political and social conflict. The repetition of hegemonic text, in tandem with particular visual images of veiled women, helps to fortify the existing status quo and convey an intentional ambiguity, where existing male dominion reinforces a sense of violence that denies the possibility of gender inequality in war-torn Afghanistan.

In terms of whose lives are grievable, meaning civilian casualties of a military operation, Butler (2003) claims that in the pictures of veiled Afghan women in the mass media “they are [depicted as] the spoils of war or they are the targets of war. And in this sense, we might say that the face is, in every instance, defaced (p. 143). For instance, viewers are offered no explanation of the visual images of an Afghan woman begging in the street (Fig. 9), and no information as to her fate. The dusty background in the following image shows the devastation around her, the open drain and the strewn
rubbish, and her bare feet indicate poverty, but it does not show if she is widowed, if her home was damaged, if she had been raped, or if she was injured: it does not show her pain, nor her fear.

Figure 9. An Afghan woman begging in the Streets in Afghanistan. Typical of images from websites such as, Shutterstock, Getty Stock images and istock Official Site.

Most Australians have been desensitised so that when they see an image of an Afghan woman covered from head to toe in a burqa they do not see her concealed suffering, her sense of grief, or her sense of loss and mourning.

Nor do we see our own acts of retaliation and invasion as aggressive (Butler, 2003). Thus it seems easier for Australians to imagine the women as victims of Muslim oppression, rather than to admit any Western collusion. Many American writers avoid the mujahedeen era because of the West’s complicity in the current conflict. Dr Huma Ahmed-Ghosh (2003) says the situation “is not only the result of the Taliban’s policies”. There is a history over the centuries of women’s subjugation; “The mujahedeen’s … record is worse than the Taliban’s …” (p. 1). Her scholarship suggests that Western warfare entwined with popular media is characterised by the rule of men and has therefore, obscured the years of covert support from the US, Iran, and Pakistan that supported the mujahedeen freedom fighters against the Soviet occupation.
What I knew about Afghan women before beginning this research

Drawing further on my observations from my travel dairy and my visits to Afghanistan (2005 and 2011) and the social action and collaborative work I carried out privately in Kabul with an orphanage, and with Afghan artist Rahraw Omarzad, before I started this research I knew that:

- Afghanistan is an Islamic Republic, 98 per cent of its population are Muslim.
- Afghanistan has a rich, vibrant and colourful textile history that incorporates hand embroidery, beaded textiles, textile weaving, carpet design and carpet weaving, traditional and tribal jewellery, and intricate Afghan hand-knit and crocheted garments.
- Afghan women are talented in the arts: the level of detail executed by Afghan women in drawing, painting, needlework, and carpet weaving is exquisite.
- Afghan women are vulnerable because of gender inequality, decades of conflict and the absence of education, tutors and resources.
- Many Afghan women have lost entire families: mothers, fathers, husbands, sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters.
- Afghan women have lived in exile in Australia since the 1979 Russian invasion as immigrants and refugees.
- Under the Taliban women were forced to wear a full cover synthetic blue burqa.
Images of veiled women challenge our western sensibilities

Images of veiled woman (Figs 9 and 10) challenge our Western sensibilities. The Persian Gulf War (1991) was a time when war came a little closer to Australians and, as in America, we were exposed to text in tandem with symbolic photos of war by Western media. Images of Muslim women were manipulated and demonised all through the Persian war by the American media to justify, explain, and interpret the conflict; such actions denied any sympathy for Muslim men, women, or children’s exposure to violence. These issues re-occurred in the current Afghan conflict.
Jeffords and Rabinovitz (1994) found that visual images in popular media such as that seen in (Fig. 11) of women in black abayas infused debates about what women wear and women’s education, with debates about political aggression in the Persian Gulf War. Technology played a large part towards the US Pentagon producing pre-packaged programs that were distributed to television networks. Such moves prompted the question, who selects the images to represent veiled Arab women and how and where they were used? Even the caption ‘Gross Violation’ depicts a Western predetermined anecdote. These images became iconic and representative of an exotic war; they also shaped Western public information.

Figure 11. Gross Violation. Women in the black abayas are typical of images used as a presupposition about warfare. Image source: http://en.alalam.ir/news/1447580 assessed 11/12/2016

Dreher and Ho (2009) listed and examined the ways in which the word ‘veil’ was integrated in headlines and publication titles in Australia - text in tandem with images of veiled women.

By the late 1990s, the veil had become standard reference in news headlines .... a handy blanket term for news items ...

... The saturation of the veil reference in the Australian popular media is evident in headlines such as ‘Nile warns of veil strife’ (Daily Telegraph 2002). ‘Lifting the veil on Muslim Women’ (The Sydney Morning Herald 1995) ‘Veiled threat an Insult to all’ (Devine 2005) (Dreher and Ho 2009 p. 20).
Within the current conflict, Afghan women were expected to adjust to mandatory transformations that destabilised their society and communities more than ever. I have included only a few of the research reports into this bias that make strong general claims of the way the media used the nuances of the veil to construct a negative image of difference through mass communication (Ahmed, 2003; Bilge, 2010; Dreher & Ho, 2009; Dupree, 2004; Fahmy, 2004; Hawthorne & Winter, 2002; Mackie, 2012; Jeffords & Rabinovitz, 1994). This emphasises the way public information is shaped, packaged, and disseminated and points to how Muslim women are represented negatively in the media by many versions of the veil (Dreher & Ho, 2004, p. 217). This is in sharp contrast to the reality of Muslim women who see the veil as a respected item of clothing.

Exemplifying this tension, Bailey and Tawadros (2003) put together an exhibition by twenty artists from diverse Muslim backgrounds in collaboration with the New Art Gallery, Walsall, the Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool and Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool, England. These artists worked with the tensions and contradictory patterns that implied veiled Muslim women only achieve Western prominence by suffering violence. Through their confronting art works, they questioned the simplifying cultural interpretations of veiled Muslim women even before 11th September 2000 and contemporary Muslim artists and scholars offered support to their veiled sisters. As a result, a groundswell of support for Afghan women saw Muslim women from around the world claim their right of purdah and/or veiling.

I have been aware for many years of the way some popular media columnists have used paronomasia, a play on words, to create rhetorical effect in ways that dehumanise the wearer of the veil, even to the point of suggesting that the veil promotes secrecy, silence, and ignorance. I argue that the demonising of Muslim men and the visual representation of veiled women in the ‘war on terror’ has fed a revival of colonialist attitudes and heralded a new world order to reassert Western dominance in the Middle East. The above mentioned theorists are articulating how the preoccupation by popular media is consistent with the Western tradition of mystical and exotic Orientalism and Muslim misrepresentation.
Deborah Rodriguez is an American hairdresser who went to Kabul as the wife of an American soldier. Later, while she was in Afghanistan she married an Afghan warlord, a relationship that is itself problematic. Her book *The Kabul beauty school; An American woman goes behind the veil* (Rodriguez, 2007) has earned her a place as a motivational speaker on the American circuit. She has followed up with another novel *The Little Coffee Shop of Kabul*, originally published as *A Cup of Friendship* (Rodriguez, 2011). Her more recent genre fiction is regarded as chick lit, a 1990s term for literature that is intended to appeal to young women by having an exotic or romantic theme. In such ways, the publishing market exoticises and romanticises war. In fact, the term ‘veil’ or ‘veiled’ in the title of any kind of text attracts attention so that it has become inappropriately linked to numerous publications under the discourse of history, politics, philosophy, corporate and medical issues, and more (as discussed further in the following chapter).

![Figure 12. Afghan women shrouded in burqa beg near a mosque, northern Afghanistan. Friday, 2nd November 2001. (AP Photo/Ivan Sekretarev)](image)

For example, when photojournalists bombard Western media with images of Afghan women in burqas suggesting that the Muslim Other represents a culture that resists modernity. The antithesis is only discernible by using a different lens to show a different ‘reality’. When one looks closely the
plight of the women in the above image is unenviable (Fig. 12), one can see that their clothing is worn and soiled. It has rained recently, as the open drain indicates and the child’s woollen clothes suggest bleak weather. The dateline is 2001 and that women are begging indicates the trauma they have suffered, it may be that their husband or father has been killed - this means there is no place for them in Afghan society and financial support is un-available to them under such circumstances. Although they are pictured sitting near a mosque, women are not always welcome to pray inside the mosque.

Feminist theorists brought attention to the complex conditions in which Afghan women became a symbolic representation of the ‘war on terror’ (Butler, 2003; Hawthorne & Winter, 2002; Rawi, 2004). At the height of the American-led bombing of Afghanistan, Western television news and video documentaries continued to concentrate on Afghan women begging in the streets, representing Afghan men as oppressors who ignored women. Most telling was how women were dishonoured and humiliated throughout the civil war; they often had little choice but to beg to try and survive as they had been abandoned by their family and by their government. Abu-Lughod (2202) succinctly describes how cultural framing “worked to artificially divide the world into separate spheres ... of West versus East, versus Muslims, cultures in which First Ladies give speeches versus others where women shuffle around silently in burqas” (p. 784). Theorist such as Razack (2007) and Butler (2003) question how conflict is articulated to put a positive spin on the ‘war on terror’.

I appreciate the volume of work by American feminist Butler (2003) who demands we consider what is speak-able and whose life can be counted as human. Since 11th September 2001, Butler turns the spotlight on America and the extreme form of racism directed towards the Muslim Other. Instead of exploiting violence, she ascribes America has the potential to make the world a better place in which to live. The American government, to paraphrase Butler, has perpetrated conflict and are perpetrating it still; having suffered violence and living in fear of violence they are “planning more of it, if not an open future of infinite war and in the name of a ‘war on terrorism’” (p.28). America has thus created an extreme public sphere of cultural fear and a mode of invisible censorship
thwarting any potential of individuals voicing opposition to the American terror war. This is seen by some, as a hegemonic act that protects western values, exacerbated by social and political practices overlooking the ethics of war, putting others at risk, and extreme loss of life. Butler offers a sophisticated account of when war visits its victims, how it causes many other burdens. Recrudescence, or the revival of Orientalism where the Muslim culture is deemed backward, uncivilized, and at times dangerous, this type of discourse sees death as just a part of the story of worldwide displacement of people from war and oppression. As Butler (2003) rightly pointed out, such media visuals acted as a form of cultural and political warfare. The mujahedeen and Taliban hegemony led to a rigid separation of Afghan men and women when the Taliban forced women to wear the burqa to divert attention away from their female shape. This cloaked the cultural intersections of separation and marginalisation of women. Western society attacked beliefs and customs that most Muslim people accept (Anderson, 2010, p. 321). And Australian Muslim women who chose to wear the veil became hyper-visible as the Muslim Other and likely targets for racial abuse and insults.

Conclusion

The visual image is used as a means to transform established and entrenched ideologies, to challenge the established order and question its logic. I have shown how images of veiled Afghan women since 11th September 2001 were foregrounded to provoke certain memories and efface others. In such ways, rhetorical text used in tandem with the visual from a Western predetermined anecdote in the counter-culture of the Afghanistan conflict serves to substantiate the Muslim Other as terrorist/ing in the eyes of many Australians.

The following chapter builds on this one and critically discusses selected academic works.
Chapter Three:
Study of selected academic works
Chapter Three: Study of selected academic works (i)

Introduction

This chapter provides a brief background for the study of an Anglocentric 1897 Orientalist representation of a veiled woman and the subsequent contemporary development of objectified images of the Afghan woman in a burqa (Ahmed, 2003 and 1992). This literature review identifies what is already known and theorised about the historical and social settings relevant for understanding the Afghan women’s stories. Juxtaposed with intentional visual placements I demonstrate how the emotional power of such images relies on the epistemology of western knowledge. Research requires the participation of many collaborators and essentially our failure to bring together the dichotomy of self and others, is a common defence mechanism to maintain the status quo. However, my relationship – and the realtionship of many women to the veiled Muslim Other becomes more evident as I locate my research within the existing literature. The association of each literary work assists with unwinding many of the tensions under consideration. Research acknowledges, for example, the threads connecting Orientalism and Islamophobia in post-colonial studies (Said, 2004; Kabbani, 1994; Mackie, 2012; Ahmed-Gosh, 2003; Liamputtong, 2010). Moreover, recent research conducted by Dunn (2007), identified these factors as playing a role in public anxiety, political debate, and media hegemony that informs the anti-Muslim sentiment in contemporary Australian society, thus negating the veracity of war experienced by Afghan women.

Heron and Reason (1997) suggest the character of an inquiry paradigm accepts the “experiential encounter with the presence of the world is the ground of our being and knowing. This encounter is prior to language and art—although it can be symbolized in language and art” (p. 276). Today, contemporary visual researchers – literary theorists – and imagery document reality to study the meaning of the visual relative to the perceptions and meaning or implication attributed to them (Coyne, 2002). Literary theory has become an interdisciplinary body of cultural theory and ethnic studies; this investigation, building on the previous chapter, examines visual images as a mode of knowledge to further demonstrate how history, culture, and political rhetoric inform the anti-Muslim racist views many Australians have developed. More and more, post-colonial criticism is
applied to a variety of texts, increasingly finding points of intersection. For example, the intersectionality works of bell hooks (1981) and Crenshaw (1989) are both progressive enterprises that investigate the historical relationships between ethnic studies and post-colonial criticism in America to illustrate the metamorphoses of past and present cultural bias.

Engaging with the analytical process of the research problem - *What is the reality behind the visual representation of the veiled Afghan woman in the blue burqa, and how do Afghan women recount their experience of cultural and political warfare now that they reside in Australia?* From an inter-disciplinary perspective I contextualise my participatory inquiry through parallel unobtrusive research. The work of Given (2017) indicates the value of using aspects from a diverse mode of methods to complement data collected through other methods. She discusses the weakness and biases of individual research methods, suggesting a more accurate perception of the entity under investigation can be obtained using the unobtrusive measure, allowing the researcher to play the role of a complete observer. She gives the example of focusing on “the build-up of things e.g. the build-up of garbage or accumulation of books in a personal library” (p. 905). This allegory is germane to the examination of print material about the Afghan cameleers and the Afghan war where although there is no direct contact, the print material amasses a palimpsest of authoritative and informative historical and background sources.

**The veiling of Afghan women’s voices**

The cultural and political complexities of twentieth-century Afghanistan explain the omission of the Afghan woman’s voice in the available academic literature. In a public lecture, Dupree (2005) clarifies:

> There is no paucity of information. The problem is the bewildering mixtures of incompatible data that lie scattered here and there. Indeed, the chaotic state of data from Afghanistan was so unreliable that for several years running Afghanistan was completely omitted from (United Nations Development Programme) UNDP’s annual global human development reports (Clark, 2013, para. 5).
Dupree’s work documents the way women in Afghanistan in the twentieth century were enjoying an improvement in women’s human rights, working and studying in the fields of education and health. Despite these educational opportunities in the 1950s and 1960s, women were later disempowered and disadvantaged through cultural and political conflict wrought by the Russian invasion and the mujahedeen and Taliban regimes. Authoritarian patriarchal rule was reestablished and enforced in Afghanistan, as described in the literature of Dupree (1992), Kandiyoti (1988) and Moghadam (1993) and discussed later in this chapter.

Qualitative research is an innovative way to interpret current Australian concepts of Muslims in Australia that date back to the nineteenth century. At the time, Australians such as Streeton, (Benjamin, 1997), exoticised images of veiled women from the Middle East and predestined the role of Afghan men in Australia (Stevens (2002). Working across past and present disciplines creates a space to account for the researcher’s own perceptions while also uncovering the palimpsest layers of interconnected interpretive systems. I summarise Australian Muslim cameleers in colonialist Australia (Stevens, 2002) and the preceding and subsequent Anglo-Afghan wars (Rashid, 2008). This provides a brief background for the study of an Anglocentric 1897 Orientalist representation of a veiled woman.

Picking up the fragmented history of Australian Muslim Cameleers
To pick up the threads of history and weave them into an account within a contemporary milieu, I have relied on the work of Stevens (2002); her book Tin Mosques & Ghantowns was first published in 1989 and unites the fragmented and isolated remnants of nineteenth-century Muslim culture in Australia. Similarly, Jones and Kenny’s (2007) work featured historical photographs, film, artworks, and oral histories of Australia’s early Afghan cameleers. Their exhibition displayed objects such as camel saddle packs, textiles, and other artefacts, portraits of the early cameleers, and paintings that reflect interactions between the cameleers and Aboriginal people. Scriver (2004) was more interested in the architectural fabric of Adelaide, South Australia and the centrality to the city of the first permanent mosque in Australia. However, Rajkowski (2005) claims her work is the first book to
trace the history of the Afghan and Indian camel drivers of Australia. Each of these works paints a vivid picture of the camel-men, their families and communities, their way of life, and their camels.

Since the events of 11th September 2001, Australian Muslims have been authenticating their early historical connections with documentaries such as In the footsteps of the ancestors: Muslims Down Under (Roude, 2009). Roude’s research project has been informed by Scriver’s 2004 architectural study of Mosques, Ghantowns and Cameleers in the Settlement History of Colonial Australia and Jones and Kenny’s (2007) Australia’s Muslim cameleers: pioneers of the inland 1860s–1930s. Roude details how Afghan Muslim cameleers were contracted from British India to be part of the exploration of the central desert in Australia (Jones & Kenny, 2007; Scriver, 2004; Stevens, 2002; Rajkowski, 2005). The discovery exploration attributed solely to our historic British explorers may not have occurred and the explorers may not have survived the trek across the Simpson Desert without the expertise of the Afghan cameleers. The British horses, donkeys, and bullocks were unable to endure the desert conditions; only camels could withstand the relentless heat and drought, and acted as a lifeline for the inland regions. The camel men were mostly Muslims. They wore turbans and flowing robes, built makeshift mosques, prepared their food in the way their religion required, and if they were married men, their women worked close by. Stevens, (2002) explained how the ‘Afghans’ who came from a variety of places that are now known as Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan were alien to nineteenth-century British settlers in South Australia.

Experience of the desolate mountainous regions on the Indian subcontinent made these men suitable for exploration in the arid regions of outback Australia. Remarkably, as Stevens (2002) noted, at that time the early Afghan cameleers were elated after their nation’s victory over the British East India Company in 1842 in the first Anglo/Afghan war. The cameleers faced immense hardships in Australia, even though their skills were required, they were marginalised on the fringes of towns and settlements by the European community where they subsisted alongside their camels (Fig. 13). Despite the racial inequity, the Muslim cameleers managed to obtain some land on the periphery of the city of Adelaide (Scriver, 2004) and in 1888 built the first bluestone permanent mosque in Australia from funds donated by the camel drivers.
The Afghan cameleers’ significant contribution to the first permanent Australian mosque went unnoticed by the British Australian population (Jones & Kenny, 2007; Scriver, 2004) and the Adelaide mosque was left to decay after the White Australia Policy made it impossible for the cameleers to stay. Their numbers declined further with the introduction of the motor car and many Afghan families merged into Aboriginal communities or the wider Australian society (Stevens, 2002).

The substantial role of the early Afghans and their work with their camels have been largely overlooked in Australia’s history. Scriver however succinctly describes how the Afghans managed the “first substantial importation of domesticated pack-animal’s” (p. 19). He suggests, “paradoxically -- as buildings could be regarded as the very antithesis of the cameleer typically peripatetic mode of dwelling” (p. 19), there are few surviving traces of the ‘Afghan’. Scriver (2004) states the absurdity
of how Afghan and Indian camel drivers were extradited to the point where the only remnant of their expedition feat is the introduced camel roaming feral in Australian outback – the architectural remains and headstones have been neglected. To paraphrase Scrivener, this is a telling theme of the racial difference that contributed to the fabric of the colonial social landscape in Australia.

In 1952, more than half a century later, while remnants of the White Australia Policy still hovered in the halls of government, “a young Bosnian Muslim and his friends, newly arrived immigrants, pushed open the high gate of the Adelaide mosque” (Jones & Kenny, 2007, p. 9). Handmade iron hinges, though rusted and corroded, still managed to support the heavy gates on an alarming tilt, but the young Bosnians succeeded in dragging the big gates open. What they found was confounding considering the Afghan cameleers had been forgotten and the mosque, built in 1888, was in a ramshackle state. Inside the mosque’s courtyard, “sitting and lying on benches, shaded from the strong sunshine by vines and fruit trees, were six or seven ancient, turbaned men. The youngest was 87 years old; most were in their 90s; the oldest was 117 years old” (Jones & Kenny, 2007, p. 9). They were the last of Australia’s Muslim cameleers. The mosque, as described by architectural historian Scrivener (2004) is “considered one of the more conspicuous motifs of difference within the architectural fabric of colonial Adelaide” (p. 19). Scrivener (2004) described how the Bosnian and his Muslim friends became the old Afghans’ confidants, ministering to their comfort and religious requirements until their last days.

The Ottoman flag and the Afghans pictured in their flowing gowns (Figs. 14 and 15) are evidence of early Australian Muslim cameleers and illustrate the mode of religion and apparel embraced by the nineteenth century Afghan Muslims. This is important to Afghan refugees and other Australian Muslims; the images are intended to remind Australians of the early Afghan Muslim presence in Australia. This could not be negated despite the newly formed Federal government of 1901 introducing flexible legislative action to restrict immigration whenever the government deemed it convenient. More recently, Sparrow (2005), as a member of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, asserts, we still speak “disparagingly of the new arrivals, as thieves, opportunists and
criminals” (p. 11). The point I am making here is we still amend a flexible legislative to control the itinerary of immigration, framed from a Western discourse of the East.

Figure 14. The Ottoman flag made by Gool and Abdullah 1915 Broken Hill. Courtesy of Justice & Police Museum

Figure 15. Afghan Cameleers c.1890 Broken Hill. Courtesy State Library of South Australia

Stevens’ noteworthy research (2002) allows all Australians to re-evaluate how the early Muslims contributed to the development of Australia. Clearly, the Adelaide settlement founded in 1839 was only twenty years old when the Afghan cameleers arrived to explore central Australia; in fact, the city boundaries were still being established. The story of Afghan cameleers in the early history of
Australia provides *a posteriori* knowledge. The cameleers were deemed backward and undesirable to mix with the European settlement. A point often unheeded is how the nineteenth century racist discrimination has transformed over time into pessimistic representations of the Muslim Other in Australian contemporary society.

Metaphorically, the concept of *pentimento* is a reappearance of an original element, when one looks closely one can still see the same elements of race and ethnicity etched in the social order of the twenty-first century. By means of Streeton’s painting of Fatma Habibi and the research programs conducted by Stevens (2002), Scriver (2004), and Jones and Kelly (2007), the discrimination and prejudices of centuries ago have become visible once again. The same issues now manifest as political rhetoric directed at Muslims and veiled women because they do not fit into the contemporary Australian way of life. In such ways the biases of history are woven into contemporary fears and racist rhetoric, for example, Islamophobia; often defined in Australia as the irrational fear of the Muslim religion and those who practice Islam. This explains the semantics germane to feminism, imperialism and paternalism where Islam is generally viewed through a western lens as misogynistic.

**The patriarchal authority that subjugates Afghan women in Afghanistan**

In Afghanistan, men are revered as the most powerful members of society. However, theorists deliberate the extent of patriarchal authority across the Muslim world and assert it contributes to large-scale female illiteracy (Carland, 2017; Dupree, 1994, 2004; Kandiyoti, 1988; Moghadam, 1993). The overriding tribal culture means that women’s illiteracy has evolved over centuries and in those circumstances Afghan women themselves abide by the superiority of men. This means generations of women have been denied literacy skills, which negates their ability to communicate, interpret, and analyse written and printed materials. In other words, finding literature written by Afghan women that deals with the subjective effects of the residue of war is improbable. Unsurprisingly, a notable gap in literature about Afghanistan then is literature authored by Afghan women. Further bringing into sharp focus the burden of exclusion in this area of endeavour, anthological studies of Muslims are many, as discussed later, and include, for example, Hawthorne and Winter’s (2002) collection of selected writings by various authors. While a computer search found more than 26,400
publications with the key words ‘Afghan women’ most are written about Afghan women, not by Afghan women. Here I have included a few significant publications, such as Pakistani, Shahnaz Khan’s (2014) Two Faces of Afghan Women, which looks at the relationship of Afghan and Pakistani women, she is one of the founding members of the Pakistani American Association. Another is, Nahid Aziz (2011), educated in American in clinical psychology her work examines the mental health-related issues in Afghanistan. Afghan born, her journal article What Immolation means to Afghan Women chronicles how women became prime victims and weapons of war. She examines statistics of what she defines as a desperate cry by Afghan women protesting the gendered status traditionally afforded women. This envelops everything from forced marriages to lack of education as well as the great shame intensified by rejection from the woman’s own family. Sara, describes her shame and humiliation of rejection in Chapter Eight.

The literature of Moghadam (1993) and Kandiyoti (1988) show there is a clear argument that Afghan women are reliant on the patriarchal family unit for survival. Their social status is determined by the number of male children they produce under the family-based tribal arrangements that prevail throughout the country. Moreover, women are subordinate not only to all the men in the family but the more senior women, especially to their mother-in-law (Moghadam, 1993). Marriage often demands a total break from the woman’s natal family, although this can vary to the degree of endogamy, which is the practice of marrying within a specific ethnic group. Men control women by enforcing a rigid code of behaviour that links family honour to female virtue. For instance, Caldwell (1978) defines Afghanistan as part of the ‘patriarchal belt’ and describes families from the Middle East as “extended, patrilineal, patrilocal, patriarchal, endogamous and occasionally polygynous” (p. 558). Maintaining these characteristics explains how the family unit works and why fertility is high: “the extended family is the dominant economic and security unit in this region” (p. 558). This means that in Afghanistan, assistance is usually inaccessible from elsewhere and the family unit is the major economic and social entity in Afghan society in the absence of nation-wide government service infrastructure.
In fact, Moghadam (1993) quotes Kandiyoti (1988) as having used the term “classic patriarchy” to describe gender relations and the position of women in the Middle East (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 122). Classic patriarchy in Afghanistan is maintained, and as Ahmed-Ghosh (2003) claims, “the family is reinforced along gender hierarchies to ensure the transformation of religion, culture and family values from mothers to children. This idealisation does nothing to improve women’s material status since the concept of motherhood is glorified and not the actual mother” (p. 8). The overwhelming majority of Afghan women marry within their religion. To clarify, the term ‘patrilocal’ relates to the bride residing with the patriarchal family and ‘patrilineal’ relates to the relationship to the father or descent through the male line.

Conflicting political agendas and opposing patriarchal energies throughout the twentieth century in Afghanistan remain an unpredictable measure of (dis)empowerment for Afghan women. Theorists such as Ahmed-Ghosh (2003), Dupree (1986), Saikal and Maley (1991), and Rashid (2008) acknowledge the modernising era that allowed autonomy for Afghan women. However, gender roles within the family ensure power and control of women by men within the structures of patriarchy, besides Dupree (2004) maintains that threatening this safe-haven is seen by men as the destruction of the very fabric of Afghan society. Theorists such as Ahmed-Ghosh (2003), Abu-Lughod (2002), Butler (2003), and Jordan-Zachery (2007) imply this helps to explain why Afghan women choose to maintain cultural and social invisibility in their country of origin as well as their host country.

Subsequently Afghan women have frequently been the prime target of patriarchal and religious feudalist exchange, meaning that Afghan women are compelled to participate in traditional practices where their role in society is not always visible to outsiders. Traditional purdah, the religious and social practices of female seclusion and the sexualisation of space was defined by dependence on the male. Dupree (2004) suggests, purdah or covering is about protecting women; Afghan tradition is all “about families and family honour” (p. 118). Dupree’s critique is relevant for understanding the theoretical paradigms that will help to make sense of the context in which my research is situated. The purdah of women is a tribal response to maintaining patriarchal authority over Afghan women.
and preserving blood lines. The family quarters in Afghanistan, as Edwards (2002) asserts, is considered a sacred space, and a man who cannot defend or control what is sacred to him is said to be “no man at all” (p. 172).

**A plethora of (re)presentations of Afghan women’s voices?**

I have found, for the most part, that despite international interest in Afghan women, stories about them and the traumas they have faced in Afghanistan are the product of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that operate international agencies. There is a plethora of journals, websites, and blogs that chronicle the trauma of Afghan women and journals that publish specific studies on resettlement experiences, such as the one by Nida, Joyce, Russo, and Earnest (2012). It is important to note that these are mostly about Afghan women, not by Afghan women. To date, I have not found any research where Afghan women now living in Australia chronicle the details of their own experience of warfare in Afghanistan and their transition into Australian society. Not surprisingly, there are literary inconsistencies. For example, a Western-educated Afghan male politician, Ashrah Haidari (2011), has published research titled *Empowering Afghan Women*. Haidari is a counsellor at the Embassy of Afghanistan in Washington, DC. His book is a statistical study and he consistently engages in public diplomacy to maintain international focus on the stabilisation and reconstruction of Afghanistan. Ironically, he appears to capitalise on the nonexistence of women’s human rights in Afghanistan. Other literary accounts trace the historical background of the Anglo/Afghan wars, as well as the many political interruptions by external forces, they determine the current political outcome in the history of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Generally, these are through the lens of militia, but there are well-intended accounts by Western anthropologists such as Edwards (2002), Dupree (1973), and his wife Dupree (1986).
Recognised literary works about Afghanistan

To set up the transnational and contextual background of my research I rely on the literary works of American academic, Nancy Hatch Dupree (1986, 1992, 2002, 2004).\(^6\) Dupree is recognised as an international expert on the social aspects, of Afghanistan that envelopes the history, art, and archaeology of Afghanistan, Dupree (b. 1927) has dedicated decades to documenting and preserving Afghanistan’s cultural heritage; she has an insightful and affectionate association with Afghanistan and her peoples. What makes her unique is that she lived in Kabul from 1962 and only left in the late 1970s with her husband Louis Dupree (1925–1989) because of the Russian invasion. They were eyewitness to the cultural destruction of government and educational institutions such as libraries, schools, and universities during the internal conflict (1978–1992). Dupree returned to Kabul after her husband died in 1989. She managed to smuggle the documents she and her husband had collected back into Afghanistan where she convinced the Kabul University of their importance. Now in her nineties, she is the founder of the Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University which houses some of the only surviving documents of various books, surveys, reports, and newspapers saved from the many warring factions, including the Taliban. Her work is cited by theorists such as Edwards (2002), Ahmed-Ghosh (2003), Abu-Lughod (2002), Moghadam (1993), Rashid (2008) and many more when engaging with Afghanistan and its historical and social settings.

Another relevant theorist is Hanifi (2011), who was born in Afghanistan in 1935. He brings to light many publications that he claims are viewed through the lens of “Euro-American academics, travellers, journalists, and aid and development workers who become instant ‘authorities’, ‘experts’, ‘specialists’, and ‘old hands’ about the country” (p. 269). He notes that copious amounts of Western research are aimed at policy makers and military personnel who are in a hurry to go to war in Afghanistan, and suggests that it is often a distorted patriotic anthropology of the relationship between east and west. Hanifi is scathing in his critique, claiming that “the young students who were on the receiving end of ... ‘irrelevant knowledge’ ... were exposed to distorted and inaccurate

\(^6\) For a respectful description of Nancy Depree, who is known as the grandmother of Afghanistan, see Dalrymple (2013)
representations of the country” (Hanifi, 2011, p. 269). Western theorists have often promoted Afghanistan as their specialty, which Hanifi claims “has accumulated substantial academic, economic, and political capital” (p. 269). This implies a false narrative and a biased nature that promotes a Western political standpoint. Prejudiced text, in other words, has the same effect as dominant visual representations of the Other. Either way, misrepresentation generates propaganda and contributes to the residual effects of war without any understanding of the complexities of ancestry and honour in Afghanistan’s culture. This is because the discourse around the subject of women can be a useful weapon between rival groups to divert attention from political agendas, examples being the Russian occupation, mujahedeen freedom fighters, and the Taliban regime. Each command held different values and conflict strategies complicated by America democracy in Afghanistan.

Opinionated text also serves to highlight the tensions, invisibility and unrecorded accounts of Afghan women’s experiences of warfare. As Hawthorne and Winter (2002) suggest, “the rights of Afghan women do not matter. They do not matter to the US State, nor do they matter to the Afghan State ... Women’s rights only matter when they can be used, manipulated ...” (p. 277). According to Australian theorists Hawthorne and Winter (2002), before the 11th September 2001 attacks, the Americans could not have cared less about gender inequality and the disempowerment of Afghan women by the mujahedeen or the Taliban. Hawthorne and Winter (2002) whose research interests include transnational studies and transcultural feminism, lament that “Afghan women don’t matter now any more than they did when the Northern Alliance was raping them. The US paid no attention to the abuse of women then” (p. 155). They refer to Beneath the veil (Ure, 2001), an important documentary that acknowledges the experience of Afghan women begging in the streets to support their families under the cruelty of the Taliban regime. Afghan women were invisible in the sense that the atrocities aired in the documentary went unnoticed by the US until it was convenient to use them for wartime propaganda. Hawthorne and Winter (2002) claim it was then played many times and seen as essential viewing to save Afghan women in the burqa from Muslim fundamentalists. This approach demonstrates how Afghan women’s hyper-visibility was elevated in the international community.
I argue that the myriad of surreptitiously voiceless and silent images of the burqa-clad Afghan woman were implemented especially for purposes of deception to vindicate the invasion of Afghanistan at the expense of the Afghan woman’s individuality. The symbolic image of the Afghan woman in the repressive burqa was hijacked in the name of ‘saving’ Afghan women, so they would be freed from oppression. Hawthorne and Winter’s critical analysis is thus useful, particularly regarding the silence on pre-Taliban Afghanistan. Their work is informed through a Western feminist theory and human rights lens, and is a valiant attempt to offer an insight to the devastation suffered by ordinary Afghan people after the 2001 Afghan bombing; scenes that are incomprehensible to most Western developed countries...

Homes of sticks and canvas and barbed wire
A television antenna perched on a treetop
Stakes claims to modern luxuries
This urban wasteland like so many others

Theorists such as Moghadam question the expert western opinion of the phenomena of the veil; the pervasive international occupation in Afghanistan that has seen prejudiced outsider interpretations of the Muslim Other. Moghadam (1993) is often described as an Islamic feminist, and one of her major criticisms concerns the conflation of Islam and Islamism. She claims that the equation of Islam with Islamism is precisely the claim of Islamic fundamentalists; it misrepresents Islam and confuses the issues. The media response and representations of Islam since the events of 11th September 2001 is a telling response to the use and perception of veil imagery throughout the world. The veiling of Afghan women, firstly by the mujahedeen and Taliban, as shown in Figure 20, and secondly by Western popular media as depicted by Mackie (2012), is symbolic of a silence that represents them as veiled invisibly, but in the latter case juxtaposed with manipulated actions and speech by Western literati, the educated elite. For instance, many of those interested in the conflict in the Middle East such as Steve McCurry (Newman and McCurry, 2002) draw on a Western philosophy to support conclusions that are agreeable to their educational hypothesis.
The approach of writers such as Newman and McCurry (2002) is comparable to when a white woman appropriates agency to speak on behalf of a Muslim woman without any knowledge of her cultural circumstances. Feminist, Mohanty (1988) notes that some Western feminists assume that “women’ have a coherent group ... regardless of class or ethnicity, structures”. Her approach to such issues suggests that Western feminism discursively colonises “the lives of the Muslim Other in the third world”, and by so doing they produce a composite, singular “third-world woman” construct that “carries with it the authorizing signature of Western humanist discourse” (pp. 62-63). I would like to draw attention to how such strategies codify Third-world women, in Mohanty words, “never to raise above the debilitating generality of their ‘object’ status” (p. 79). It seems to me the key point here that is often overlooked should be, what Afghan women do, how they live, their values and their circumstances; issues that matter to Afghan women.

What is left after the war; the residue of cultural and political conflict

I use the phrase the residue of cultural and political conflict to signify firstly (cultural conflict), aspects of social and ethnic practices that have been politically contested by fragmented ancestral and tribal groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Secondly (political conflict), international political interference as a key factor in the current crisis in Afghanistan, leading to the collapse of communist Russia in 1989 by mujahedeen forces supported by American and foreign aid, provoking the civil war years and, allowing the emergence of the misogynous Taliban. With their rise, historical Mosques and shrines were desecrated changing the cultural landscape, destroying generations of development that reflected a specific rich cultural past (Hiebert, 2008.). The continuing transnational aspects of conflict in Afghanistan, the residue of war, is regularly defined by the damage directed towards national infrastructure as well as the high number of civilian deaths; leaving large numbers of refugees seeking re-location elsewhere. What is not shown - is not made visible - are the complex, invisible emotional injuries that have an ongoing effect on Afghan women in the social order of their culture.

Butler (2003) however addresses this invisibility. She notes Afghan women are in a precarious situation exacerbated by international complicity in America’s war on terror. Because of the current
political conflict and terrorism intersecting across the socio-culture of the Afghan nation, without the support of a male there is no place in Afghan society for a woman; as Hawthorne and Winter (2002) say ‘women do not matter’. Islamic fundamentalism continues to influence the Afghan government’s policies on women’s rights or lack thereof. Afghanistan is deemed as one of the most confronting places in the world to be a woman (Kandiyoti, 1988; Moghadam, 1993).

Chapter Three: Study of selected academic works (ii)

Twentieth Century: Kabul University and Soviet Socialism
Dupree’s (1992), scholarship identified prior knowledge about the veiling, de-veiling and re-veiling of Afghan women during the modernising era and the place of Afghan women in Afghan society last century. The Afghan King Amanullah (1892–1960) advocated a more urbanised and modern state in keeping with his acquaintance, the Turkish leader and reformist statesman Mustafa Ataturk (1881–1938) (Dupree, 1986; Ahmed-Ghosh, 2003). This was a time of transformation for Afghanistan; her leaders were warming to modern needs and the change from a rural ancestral society to an urban and industrial one. Ahmed (1992) deliberates on the historical developments in Islamic societies and the discourses on women and gender systems. She positions the discourses in the appropriate social and historical context clarifying further, before the modernising of Afghanistan in the early half of the twentieth century, how very few women had a role in the field of literature. But then again, the Afghan/Russian democracy relationship did support a more positive attitude to the establishment of literary associations and more freedoms for women during the Civil War (1979–1989).

Afghan women in the 1950s and 1960s were as fashion conscious as the western world, they wore open necked blouses, miniskirts and high heel shoes. They painted their nails and their hairstyles reflected the progressive changes in the status of women around the world. For instance, a photograph by Mohammad Qayoumi of Kabul University in the 1950s (Fig. 16) is in stark contrast to the twenty-first century presentation of burqa-clad Afghan women. This image shows Afghan students from the late 1950s and 1960s wearing Western-style clothing.
On 27th April 1978, the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, consisting of two small groups of urban and educated Afghans, gained political power aimed to revolutionise family privileges (Dupree, 2004). Decree No. 7, *Dowry and Marriage Expenses*, transpired to put forward to remove the unjust patriarchal, tribal, and feudalistic relations involving husband and wife and the consolidation of family ties. This decree prohibited child marriages, forced marriage, marriages in exchange for cash or commodities, and the levirate,\(^7\) and limited the dowry to a token sum.

The plan was deemed intolerable by some, unlawfully interfering with Islamic honour and violating social values (Dupree, 1992). In the cultural struggle contesting the Afghan honour, the marriage age for Afghan girls, the ethnic tribal leaders of the rural regions developed coalitions to voice

\(^7\) Levirate, the practice by which a man may be required to marry his brother’s widow, was practised in ancient Jewish society and is common in parts of Africa today.
disapproval about the freedoms women were experiencing in Kabul (Moghadam, 1993; Dupree, 2002; Ahmed-Gosh, 2003). The tribal leaders objected when the marriage age of girls was raised to eighteen years and polygamy was abolished. They opposed education for girls and forced the overturn of such radical policies by reinstating the old tribal system to conform to their classic patriarchal agenda. The disenchantment caused by Decree No. 7 widened into dissent, the government counteracted harshly and the country slid into chaos, providing the Soviet Union with the cause to invade Afghanistan in December 1979 (Weiner & Banuazizi, 1994; Edwards, 2002; Dupree, 2004).

Modernisation, in terms of marriage, education, and career privileges that were gained in the name of women’s rights, seems to have been introduced in haste and mismanaged, and this instigated a tribal revolt and the unification of the Afghan society was futile. Schools were closed and women had to revert to wearing the veil. Some urbanised women who had the benefit of education and some forms of autonomy were under virtual house arrest, forced to comply with strict classic patriarchal practices of purdah, which meant once again women were hidden from mainstream society. Accordingly, and demonstrating the inconsistencies Afghan women have experienced over time, recalling women were directed to de-veil in the early 1900s, encouraging the modernising period in Afghanistan, only to be forced in the later part of the 1900s to re-veil by the mujahedeen and Taliban to uphold Pashtunwali.

The concept of Pashtunwali family honour
The concept of Islamic family honour or Pashtunwali (Wahab, 2012) in Afghanistan is difficult for Westerners to understand and includes the principles of family honour, the fabric of family honour, and the culture of family honour. Male and female are taught the Pashtunwali values at an early age, they grasp the concept of pride and modesty, honesty and shame, which usually remain a major consideration for both men and women. To emphasize, the activities associated with Pashtunwali are hospitality, honesty, justice, bravery, self-dignity and honour and, the honour of women. This wordlist is the antithesis of contemporary western comprehension of Afghan social culture.
To accurately accentuate, these attributes arise from ancient nomadic tribal law, where in unforgiving arid conditions, hospitality was crucial for survival. In the harsh conditions of yesteryear women and children were sheltered from wild animals and unexpected tribal aggression. Yet family honour seemed less relevant during the Russian communist administration in Kabul (1977–1979)⁸ and the civil war among the rival mujahedeen factions extending to the Taliban regime (1992–1996). Edwards (2002) explains, “the pivotal moments where the moral logic of honour clashed with the exigencies of living in an increasingly modern and hybridized society” (p. 99). In other words, the complex complications of contemporary transnational interference in Afghanistan became an underlying thread that motivated the Taliban to return the nation to an uncontaminated Islamic society.

After the Soviets pulled their troops out of Afghanistan in 1989, the Afghan peoples were subjected to further conflict while the mujahedeen were skirmishing with the fundamentalist Taliban regime (Edwards, 2002; Dupree, 2004; Bezhan, 2009). This meant that rations were limited to half the former allowance, and water and electricity around the city of Kabul were sporadic. Fighting reduced the control of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan to the confines of the city of Kabul. The warring mujahedeen, waged guerrilla warfare against the communist Russian/Afghan government and sympathisers; they were known to have used rape as a weapon of war, while the Taliban imposed the all-encompassing blue burqa, rendering women faceless.

The years of civil war against the communist Afghan government, the loss of life, random bombings that left women widowed, poverty stricken and abandoned, was slow to emerge transnationally. Many countries, emulating America, observed the Cold War (1979–1989) after the Soviet Russia invasion in Afghanistan, from a distance, even though foreign aid bolstered the mujahedeen insurgents. Theorist, Judith Bulter (2004) speaks about the precariousness of, “those lives in

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⁸ The communist administration was a time when the Russians sought to influence the Islamic tribal regions of Afghanistan. The invasion occurred in 1979, the Russians occupied Afghanistan until 1989. This period is often referred to as Afghanistan’s Cold War or Civil War.
Afghanistan, or in other United States’ targets who were also snuffed out brutally without recourse to any protection” (p. 37). Hence, explaining the hesitant stance by Western agencies in reporting the horrendous wartime cruelty as mentioned by RAWA (see Chapter 2) until such time it directly benefitted the American military operations, and their self-preservation approach to the wars on terror and their pretence, ‘to save Afghan women.’ More recently, Carland (2017) asserts misinformation regarding Afghan women replicated the “negative view of the treatment of Muslim women ... that has persisted for centuries” (p. 13). She cites the days of Lord Cramer, the British Consul-General in Egypt (1883-1907) who was also motivated to ‘liberate Muslim women’. As Razack (2007) observed, the international community was slow to acknowledge the elements of Western complicity in the current Afghan conflict. To quote Razack, we maintained a “wilful blindness ... [to] our collective history, unable to call up, for example, anything that might show us how we are implicated in the West’s power over the non-West” (p. 390). I elaborate on this later in this chapter.

Summarizing Razack, Afghanistan highlights our failure to recognise the connections between what we are accustomed to with the privileges we protect through our ignorance and how we choose not to see the residue of warfare that forced Afghan women to leave their homes and families. As the confusing conflict between the Russian/Afghan communist government wore on there were some women who became symbols of the jihad. “Many women, who had lost their husbands, lost status when they were compelled to live as appendages, at times almost as servants, in extended family’s households” (Dupree, 2004, pp. 7–8). Children were absorbed into multiple unions where in some cases they were ignored when privilege or education became available. Noor Ali’s oral history in Chapter Seven is firsthand testament to such happenings. This also brings to light, just how Afghan women became pawns as part of the American strategy, firstly concerning Russian aggression and secondly, bolstering support for the October 2001 bombardment of Afghanistan.

Indeed, international attention only focused on the plight of Afghan women when Italian politician Ms Emma Bonino, the European Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs, and nineteen Western journalists and aid workers accompanying her were arrested in Afghanistan. The arrest drew
international criticism after the Taliban religious police held them hostage for three hours in September 1997. “They had been touring a female hospital ward funded by the European Union (EU), when journalists accompanying Bonino were arrested for taking photographs of women patients—all photography was banned by the Taliban” (Rashid, 2008, p. 65). After this incident, the Taliban declared they would not allow women to be treated together with men, leaving just one hospital in the city of Kabul where women could be cared for. Rashid points out that it was this incident that attracted the attention of the international community and it was only then they became alarmed to the Taliban terrorisation.

Visual studies of Afghan women
The contemporary representation of the veiled woman mimics the Orientalist mystical symbol of the Muslim Other. To quote Mackie (2012), “images of veils in blue/purple shades, and the mesh which hides the faces of Afghan women ... become a convenient visual shorthand to indicate Afghan women, the oppressiveness of the former Taliban regime, and the nation of Afghanistan” (p. 13). Mackie (2012) used photographic images of battered Afghan women to highlight how these graphic accounts positioned America as supreme and powerful. She suggests their exploitive use by popular media repeats some classic Orientalist modus operandi. Her study has combined visual representations from 11th September 2001 to 2011 when it was reported that Osama Bin Laden had been killed by US Navy Seals in Pakistan (Mackie, 2012, p. 1). She focused on three images, the first was a photograph by Behrakis, an unnamed Afghan girl in 2001 (Fig. 17). The second was Sharbat Gul, ‘the Afghan girl’ who appears on the cover of the National Geographic magazine in 1985 (Fig. 18). The third was Bibi Aisha, whose mutilated face appeared on the front cover of Time magazine 2010 (Fig. 19).
Figure 17. 14th November 2001: A young Afghan woman shows her face in public for the first time after five years of Taliban Sharia law as she waits at a food distribution centre in Kabul. Image: Reuters/Yannis Behrakis

Figure 18. The Afghan girl photographer Steve McCurry 1984
Images of veiled women make a convincing case of how symbolic representations are inextricably linked with military hegemony. Mackie (2012) draws on the long history of how Western society deliberates the veil and, she points out, whereas the earlier Orientalist representations traded in “feelings of desire, enchantment, mystery and intrigue, the photograph of Aisha is rather about horror. In describing the barbarity of the Taliban however, this is still within the parameters of Orientalist discourse” (p. 14). Mackie goes on to argue that these representations locate “the first world viewer as active and articulate spectator and the third world woman as passive and silent” (p. 19). Fahmy (2004) is another significant example of similar research, she looked at how Afghan women might be liberated after the American intervention in October 2001. Her investigation was part of an American Associated Press (AAP) project, she claimed the study was intimately linked with a Western portrayal of the Orient. For instance, from nearly three hundred samples only three Afghan women revealed their face and hair. Fahmy (2004) infers that the AAP, and her own part of the research study, failed to humanise the women by ignoring the importance of cultural regards that relate to religious practices of purdah. I respect the work of Fahmy and consider that the oral
histories of Afghan women in Australia and their personal observation of warfare will make a significant contribution to knowledge in this field.

Carland (2017) says she “was vexed – and rather surprised – at the inexplicable paucity of information on a topic [Muslim women] that is so debated” (p. 6). She uses a sociological approach to Muslim women, “challenging the sexism they have experienced from the earliest days of Islam using religious arguments” (p. 6). To address that gap, she interviewed western educated Muslim women from Australia and North America in 2011 and 2012, she enquired about the women’s religious and ideological inspirations, tensions and struggles they were burdened with. Her investigation contrasts to the Afghan women who participated in this research and have only conversational English. There are comparable works that show research about Afghan women in the American academic system such as Samuels and Ross-Sheriff (2008). I have found studies of Muslim women that include Afghan women, these are studies of refugees in Australia by Pittaway and Bartolomei (2001) and studies of Afghan women in Australia germane to the subjects of pregnancy, health, and wellbeing. The point I am reiterating here, is this work is about Afghan women, not by Afghan women.

**Piecing together the tattered threads of historicity in literature**

The following section examines the frayed threads of times gone by and brings to notice what Pittaway and Bartolomei (2001) define as ‘gender blindness’. I have used the academic literature to show how the nineteenth-century British explorers of the Australian wilderness are enshrined in early Australian European history but the Afghan explorers and their camels are disconnected from the Australian colonialist memory. The fact that their Muslim footprint has faded and their stories have been largely forgotten in Australian history relates to the reluctance to accept Muslims by the wider Australia society. Scriver (2004) claims, when referring to our early Australian Muslim explorers, that “they didn’t fit tidily enough into the emerging script of wartime propaganda” (p. 32). It has been observed that some of our world leaders, such as America’s ex-President Bush (2002) and Australia’s ex-Prime-minister Howard, use negative political rhetoric and incite racism towards the Muslim Other via racist media discourse (Sparrow, 2005, p. 68). This is demonstrated more

Contemporary anti-Muslim sentiment in Australia is reproduced through a racialization that includes well-rehearsed stereotypes of Islam, perceptions of threats and inferiority, as well as fantasies that the Other do not belong (Dunne, Klocker, and Salaby. 2007, p. 1).

As the confusing conflict between the Russian/Afghan communist government wore on there were some women who became symbols of the jihad. Children were absorbed into multiple unions where in some cases they were ignored when privilege or education became available. Noor Ali’s oral history in Chapter Seven is firsthand testament to such happenings.

**Interim**

This is an important and large chapter accounting for a long and protracted theoretical background that has a bearing on appreciating the lived reality of Afghan women.

Before I launch into the theory of classic patriarchy, I wish to acknowledge how white privilage is embedded throughout western society stimulating academic interest. Privilege can be seen in multiple variables of implication, such as race, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, citizenship, religion, physical ability, health and education and more. As a white Australian privileged woman, and as my association with Afghan women develops; I must continually examine my efforts to give an account of my privileged experience counter to the thwarted lives of Afghan women in Afghanistan and in Australia. I also declare that I do have a personal investment in this research. I want to see cultural and religious equality in Australia for my Christian and Muslim grandchildren. I want to learn about the Afghan woman under the blue burqa, I want to hear her stories in her words, the words of the Muslim Other, so that I can explain her world to my Muslim and non-Muslim grandchildren. In this context, the essential way of seeing the Muslim Other, and the essential use to which their representation are put, has not changed. The overlapping system of prejudice and racism in Australia generates cultural anxiety and moral panic towards the veiled
Muslim Other and denies their place in contemporary Australian society. I am of the same opinion as Dunne, Knocker and Salaby (2007) who assert that Australian Muslims have long been subjected to xenophobia, the dislike of foreigners, and Islamophobia, the paranoia of the religion of Islam. And this needs to change.

The theory of Classic Patriarchy
All societies are exposed to gender systems, and gender inequality, but not all societies are based on inflexible classic patriarchy in the strictest sense of the term. The accord of Afghan women through the visual medium, and the historical and social settings of patriarchy is relevant. It is important to understand the nature of patriarchy to fully appreciate the contextual circumstances of the participating Afghan women’s chronicle as well as the gender blindness that Pittaway and Bartolomei (2001) debate.

Kandiyoti (1988) claims that, “of all the concepts generated by contemporary feminist theory, patriarchy is probably the most overused and, in some respects, the most under theorised ... thus, the term patriarchy often evokes an overly monolithic concept” (p. 274). She goes on to suggest that radical feminism, for example, encourages a very liberal usage that applies to any form of male control, while social feminists often restrict their analysis to the relationship between “patriarchy and class under capitalism”. The emergence of the ‘fundamentalist’ movement in Afghanistan was driven by both the rural aspects of a pre-capital society and religious practices. Moghadam (1993) claims the “Islamist movements must be understood as both political struggles on the part of descending or ascending classes in contention with ruling groups and as cultural phenomena which seeks a return to values and structure of the past” (p. 125). This serves to demonstrate the Taliban’s intentions of establishing a pure Islamic society by implementing the teachings of the Koran, the Muslim holy book. Consequently, heavy restrictions were placed on women and entrenched prejudices were implemented against women in the Afghan patriarchal context and the tribal code of the dominant Pashtun Taliban.
Traditional tribal patriarchal practices of authority

The aim here is to illustrate and clarify tensions and contradictions, and how these occurred depending on the leaders throughout the twentieth century. For instance, polygamous unions are foreign to most Australians, yet generations of polygamous and multi-unions in Afghanistan were seen to be ‘normal’ to maintain family wealth and family ties. Unpredictably, these practices were re-instated to defend Afghan culture and maintain family law, because of the enormous loss of men during the Russian invasion.

The classic patriarchy practice, “entails forms of control and subordination that cut across cultural and religious boundaries, such as those of Hinduism, Confucianism and Islam” (p. 278). Afghan women, once again were put in the undesirable position of choosing a husband married to a sister-in-law, all of whom had lived together within the domestic compound as an extended family. Women, who had previously shared stories, supported each other in their pregnancies and child minding, had their value and self-worth unexpectedly negated when they were required to marry their dead husband’s brother. In Afghanistan, this form of patriarchy and domination is often offset by the control that older women attain over younger women (Dupree, 1992; Moghadam, 1993), often causing violence of women by women who are forced by circumstances to co-exist within the patriarchal family parameters. Kandiyoti, (1988) claims Afghan women more particularly have been governed by this strict form of classic patriarchal authority. Caldwell (1978) critiques Afghanistan as a predominantly rural and pre-capitalist society that includes tribal nomadic groups, with limited literacy, thus explaining the vulnerability of Afghan woman now living in Australia. They have experienced a life of limited opportunity, little infrastructure development, and a traumatised urbanisation due to decades of conflict.

Ahmed-Ghosh (2014) advocates that warfare in Afghanistan is “a continuum that is systematic of a patriarchy that has reinforced it since time immemorial” (p. 5). Patriarchy plays itself out by promoting rituals in cultural specific ways, Ahmed-Ghosh explains, “in Afghanistan, this has happened through tight control of women traditionally by tribal leaders and in recent times by changing regimes” (p. 5). Thus, paternalistic domination perpetuates the privileging of masculinity.
Afghanistan has seen foreign invaders such as the Persians, British, Russians, Americans, and Australians, thus accounting for masculinity that is defined by a sense of warriorism that in turn fosters a culture of power, dominance, war, and guns. When that happens Afghan, women bear the brunt of combat: they are widowed, forced to beg or seek asylum, they become the face of war.

Theorists Leung and Chiu (2010) who work in Cross-Cultural Psychology articulate how men “will increase their adherence to cultural conventions and through this strategy obtain a sense of symbolic immortality—the body may perish after death, but the culture one belongs to will continue to propagate” (p. 726). The seeming indifference to women and children and the rebuff to women’s concern for their children’s safety, expose symbolic cultural-ism. In other words, the psychological experience of conflict threatens the male’s cultural world view and masculine honour. It seems that, because of unrelenting conflict, this kind of patriarchal righteousness justifies the withdrawal of basic human rights in Afghanistan and is another form of retrieving masculine honour through a dominance that renders women vulnerable to violence.

Staunch patriarchal structures of everyday life in Afghanistan have been highly resistant to change, as seen by the fierce fighting of the mujahedeen and the Taliban with enforced veiling and segregation being a form of guarding cultural identity to protest American imperialism. This extreme is underpinned by an overriding ambition “to return the country to an imagined state of original grace before the coming of secular education and other imported evils from beyond Islam’s borders” (Edwards, 2002, p. 21). Moghadam (1993) cites the 1970s rebel-controlled Afghanistan and the social interaction of a nation in conflict for collapsing family structures and fragmenting values. This demonstrates how gender becomes politicised during times of conflict. By 1996, Moghadam’s (1993) comments rang louder as ordinary Afghans escaped the worst extremes of war under the Taliban.

The actions of neo-patriarchal states pretending to save Afghan women has seen America occupy Afghanistan since October 2001. In fact, Moghadam (1993) claimed that “constructions of gender and discourses about women are sometimes a convenient weapon between
contending political groups” (p. 125). Some examples include the constant politicised visual representations of the veiled Afghan women begging in the streets, which incidentally is prohibited by the Afghan government. Gender violence is rampant, rape and other forms of torture are used as strategies of war, even though Afghan women rarely disclose the circumstances of such experiences. In Australia, popular media and the Western political rhetoric as well as government discourse about the Muslim Other shape public opinion.

The role of women in Afghanistan is still an objectionable and contested situation for many educated and urban women in Afghanistan; it perpetuates gender inequality in marital co-residency and throws the focus on the humiliation and complexities of the classic patriarchal structural overlay of authority (Moghadam, 1993). This brings into focus the compounding circumstances that intensify for Afghan women because of the undesirable aspects of privileging masculinity. Throughout my associations with Afghan women, I have observed how Afghan co-wives or polygamous families are often described as a sister-in-law or a niece, which is in truth often accurate and enables co-wives to fulfil the criteria of Humanitarian Family entrant into Australia. These complex marital relationships, legal in Afghanistan and illegal in Australia, mean that some Afghan women still uphold the strict patriarchal practice of honour-shame and how others see them, thus maintaining Pashtunwali family honour.

**New context, old prejudices**

Afghan women now living in Australia therefore bring with them an Islamic patriarchal epistemology overshadowed by conflict and Western intervention, where they have been further subjugated by religious practices interpreted by misogynous adherents of uncompromising and aggressive patriarchy regimes. Within the current script of wartime propaganda and political rhetoric, and as Pittaway and Bartolomei (2001) point out, as a nation we are wilfully blind. For instance, why do we not see people who escaped multiple forms of terrorism in their homelands are equally fearful of terrorist organisations in their country of resettlement? A classic example in Australia is when foreign conflict in the Middle East is vilified by our Australian government, and when they explicitly consider denying ‘veiled women’ attending Australian Parliament sessions
Why was the focus on veiled women? In the face of the Iraq crisis known as ISIS or ISIL, members of our government proposed new measures to ban visitors wearing headscarfs and face veils from accessing open public places in the House of Representatives or the Senate in Australia’s Parliament House (Gray, 2011, p. 293). I question our leaders deliberating the criminalising of women who wear the veil. In so doing, they reinforce the oppression and inequality of the female Muslim Other. In this way, our politicians make women who abide by purdah both the object of race politics and the subject of political aggression with total disregard to the possibility that they are equally alarmed by international terrorist activities. This kind of overt prejudice further alienates our Australian Muslim population; race discrimination of this sort is a strategy that our leaders authorise to counteract the Muslim Other. Indeed, this is another intersection that Afghan women are confronted with as they navigate Australia’s contemporary society. The view I am putting forward here is largely in agreement with Gray (2011) who discoursed the risks of Muslim women’s full facial coverings that have been argued in Parliament by Australian ex-Prime Minister Tony Abbott. Gray suggested Abbott; doesn’t support banning the burqa, but admitted he finds it ‘confronting’ and wished people wouldn’t wear it. Ironically, political anti-Muslim rhetoric is an intentional act of terror and seems to be influenced by stereotypical assumptions and attitudes characteristic of the Orientalist memory that perpetuates political antagonism towards Muslims in Australia.

I am aware that these issues are controversial to many but I am reminded by Razack’s (1998 & 2007) comments of stealing the pain of others; when will we be outraged about someone else’s rights? To paraphrase Razack, intersectionality or interlocking systems need one another, they help depend on each other symbolically or hierarchical as classified. Her work brings into focus how post-colonialism impedes and dehumanises minority groups.

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9 Anthony Gray’s abstract considers constitutional arguments that would arise if a government at either federal or state level decided to ban dress often identified as having religious connotations. This is not a far-fetched scenario, with at least one current Member of Parliament calling for such a ban, and bans operating in some overseas jurisdictions. His argument concludes that there would be serious constitutional doubt about such a law.
The ‘invisible’ and ‘hyper-visible’ intersections that complicate life for Afghan women

Jordan-Zachery (2007) has worked with the theory of intersectionality to study what makes women simultaneously ‘invisible’ and ‘hyper-visible’ to members of their own community: Critical race and gender theorists have recognized that, indeed, symbols and imagery used in the marginalization of black women are ‘artificial’. However, they have also recognized that the political usage of such symbols and imagery is real in the lives of women and as such have real consequences. (Jordan-Zachery, 2007, p. 256). The title of Jordan-Zachery’s (2007) work, *Am I a Black Woman or a Woman Who Is Black*, is a play on words. She uses paronomasia to put emphasis on the ambiguity at play for American-African women. The concept of intersectionality helps to explain “how the social construction of poor black women makes them simultaneously invisible and hyper-visible to members within their own community and to those outside of their community” (p. 257). She discusses the social construct that sees minimum resistance against policy that perceives “black, substance-abusing, pregnant, and parenting women substantially different from white women who are also engaging in similar ‘illegal’ behaviour” (Jordan-Zachery, 2008, p. 257). She analysed the policy elites use of negative images of black womanhood to marginalise them. In other words, she considers how ‘the poor black woman’ is racialised and profiled outside her community as compared to her white American counterpart. Thus, the concept of hyper-visibility to the international world allows the theory of intersectionality to be applied in the same way to Afghan women who are invisible in their own community, because many of them are obscured under the burqa. For instance, they have been socially, economically, and politically discriminated against, under virtual house arrest, and their individuality concealed (Fig. 20).
Paradoxically, the many hyper-visual versions of the veiled Afghan women inadvertently made Afghan women invisible again when Western media representations of the Muslim Other failed to provide a contextual background to the women’s circumstances. Who was she, what stories did she have to tell? What is her role in this conflict? Mackie (2012) brings into focus a key point advocating, “[a] mere glimpse of the veiled woman invokes a ready-made narrative of Middle-Eastern despotism” (p. 9). In other words, the visual analysis of a veiled woman is always and already completed by Western hegemony sensibilities.

The view I am putting forward here is largely in agreement with Berger (1980), who suggests there is always a gap in what one sees and the words used to explain the meaning. Not only has ‘seeing’ evolved throughout the years, but so has the nature in which certain subjects such as women are
seen and how visual images are seen differently today. Women’s Rights Advocate, Schneider (2002), asserts the veils of privacy in some cultures often permits, encourages, and reinforces violence of women against women, demonstrating additional layers of oppression for Afghan women. Violence against women by other female family members has long been a source of oppression that has maintained women’s subordination within the extended Afghan family compound. Many women also face literacy barriers that impede their life and means; they may be dependent on their husband as the only connection to the world outside the family compound. Schneider’s (2002) theory of intersectionality shows how she has used her comprehensive perspective on feminist lawmaking as a vehicle of social change.

The palimpsest layers of distorted narratives of conflict and destruction become evident where the storyline of the Muslim Other had been manipulated by colonialist assumptions and aggression. Razack (2007) describes how historically, the dominant representations of a veiled woman are already always a cultural mystification to invent a history which can justify some form of retribution and control. The assumption behind Razack’s point of view, is the intersections between multiples forms of discrimination and structures of subordination. I feel this validates how the current usage of the image of veiled women echoes the curiosity of our Orientalist forebears and supports my use of Streeton’s painting of an objectified veiled woman in this research. Stereotypical representations, alert us to the ways that images of veiled Afghan women have been commodified as something of use, and serve the object and purpose of war as a strategy to hide the residual effects of cultural and political violence. This seems to me to be a recurring theme that manifests itself repeatedly and describes the like-mindedness of the early Orientalist with the Neo-Orientalist standpoint since the events of 11th September 2001. The notion of intersectional crossroads and boundaries, where the overlapping layers are disturbed and the historical manuscript is lifted, reveals the residue of previous narratives and cultural interruptions in Afghanistan.

For this reason, the participating women’s oral history, their epistemology in narrative form, is a methodological approach that is used to achieve an understanding of experiencing the terror of war and the ongoing effects it has on Afghan women living in Australia. Crenshaw’s (1991) theory of
intersectionality is an appropriate lens to examine the multiple layers of terrorism, and how political conflict intersects germane to tradition patriarchal authority, gender inequality, and religious fundamentalism and how they interact together to suppress Afghan women. According to Bond (2003), human rights movements have focused on women to the exclusion of other identity characteristics “such as ethnicity, race, class, religion, and sexual orientation” (p. 72). Therefore, there has been a limited view of women’s human rights, a domesticated view that until recently focused on what Bonds calls the “shared experience” of women (p. 72). Only in the past few years have activists critically examined the role of international women’s human rights movements to expand the definition of human rights violations that veiled many of the abuses commonly perpetrated against women around the globe and, more particularly, Afghan women.

In Afghanistan, the struggle for nationalist identity violated women's international human rights through extreme forms of seclusion, isolation, and violence .... women in such situations are also often forced to choose between nationalist struggles and struggles to achieve gender equality ... leave no room for women to situate themselves at the crossroads of both struggles and lead to oversimplified notions of women's identity (Bond, 2003, pp. 71-72).

Contemporary society has been bombarded with images of veiled women in popular culture that pay no heed to the intersection of race, gender, and ethnicity. Instead the images are often informed by anti-Muslim and Anglocentric-prejudiced agendas as single issues. Yet, there are less visible issues that affect the lives of Afghan women now living in Australia, such as illiteracy, which was implemented by traditional Afghan patriarchal practices to control women. The eight Afghan women who participated in this research had varying degrees of Afghan literacy but limited English literacy. This is a key point, for many refugees, illiteracy highlights cultural barriers that further impede immigrant women. For instance, communicating in English plays a crucial role because it helps immigrants and asylum seekers take full advantage of education and employment that will in due course improve their existence. Pittaway and Bartolomei (2001) suggest Australian service providers seldom understand the extent of life under extreme fundamentalist patriarchal mandates. Hence, resettlement services are not fully aware of the requirements of Afghan women (Pittaway
& Bartolomei, 2001). This means that many government agencies are only getting one part of the women’s story informed by the same constant imagery that forms public attitudes about saving Afghan women from the oppression of Muslim men. This is evident in the data collected for this research: not one of the eight Afghan women interviewed for this research has received any form of professional counselling as a refugee or as a humanitarian entrant, despite some traumatic experiences. These are some of the political and representational aspects that I explore using Crenshaw’s (1991) intersectionality as part of my theorising.

Conclusion

I have examined the literature to better understand the historical context of Afghanistan and how the events of 11th September 2001 became a framing discourse through which to examine new political dilemmas and the positioning and circumstances of Afghan women transnationally and transculturally. This literary and background history combined puts into context the intersections of strict classic patriarchal practices as a cultural and traditional phenomenon that affects the lives of veiled Afghan women both over there and over here. The history between the early Afghan cameelers and the first English-Australian explorers in the nineteenth century, examined through the lens of Orientalism, essentially informed an important background for postcolonial-feminist studies. In so doing, I substantiated a sense of pentimento, the re-appearance of an underlying tension between east and west painted over by the broad-brush strokes of western hegemony.

Retracing the veiling, de-veiling, and re-veiling of Afghan women in the twentieth century through the lens of modernism showed education and employment in mixed male/female situations in Afghanistan before the rise of the Taliban when female schools were closed and women were forced to revert to veiling. In a classic struggle by the Taliban to protect Afghan women and establish a pure Islamic society, they enforced the traditional teachings of the Koran and tribal systems of traditional classic patriarchy practices and masculine dominance in areas of society. The nonexistence of women’s human rights in Afghanistan draws attention to the domestic violations Afghan women have been subjected to as well as the gender priorities they are obliged to practice
in culturally specific ways. These are best explained by the intersections of marital co-dependence and co-residency that uphold lifelong patriarchal practices of female honour. A contested situation in Afghanistan for Afghan women further intensified by the secularist presumptions of most western societies.

In the twenty first century, Neo-Orientalism, a modern incarnation of Orientalist thinking brings to attention the use of political powers to enforce Western values at the expense of a civilian local culture such as in Afghanistan. Post-colonialism and academic disciplines are characterised by methodologies and theories that analyse, explain, and respond to the patriarchal Orientalist memory, a memory triggered by the legacies of unequal relationships between Christians and Muslims in Australian history. To reveal the layered systems of western hegemony that impacts on the lives of Afghan women the theory of intersectionality is the chosen tool of excavation. Intersectionality as a theory, provides a way of systematically looking at multiple factors, at how issues of gender and ethnicity for example overlap in the lives of individual Afghan women in Australia.

The next chapter, Chapter Four is a peroration, an effort to recapitulate the principle points of Orientalism and the Orientalist.
Chapter Four: Peroration of Orientalism and the Orientalist memory
Chapter Four: Peroration of Orientalism and the Orientalist memory

Introduction

The theory of Orientalism attributes a triptych on the theme of the colonialist, where Orientalism exerts influence over the Orient that in turn stimulates Western consumerism of Orientalism. To enumerate, Orientalism is the knowledge of the Orient, while the Orientalists were colonialist observers, people who documented the colonisation process of foreign locations to learn the customs and behaviour of other societies and cultures in the Middle East. They went to “desert countries that had long known the imprint of Islam, and which had long been closed to the European traveller” (Benjamin, 2003, p. 7).

Characterising the Orientalist

Orientalists were mostly artisans, painters, photographers, poets, and authors who travelled to the east. They produced important work that recorded colonial empire-building even though by-and-large the Orientalist failed to understand the integrity of the material they documented. Their perceptions were coloured by their own moral values and ethical principles. The point I am reiterating here is how the Orientalist image is framed in a Western discourse of the east. Benjamin (2003) compares the Orientalist artist to the early anthropologists and ethnographers and their European encounters with the Islamic worlds in the Middle East. This leads me to consider the reliability of the Orientalist’s work; like that of the early anthropologists and ethnographers who had a vested, albeit often subconscious interest in creating an inventory that represented their subjects from a biased and political standpoint.

The image of Fatma Habibi fits neatly into the discourse of Edward Said’s (1979) Orientalism and the mystic of the Orient, where Said reasons and explains how the Muslim voice was silenced. I believe, the 1897 image highlights the obstinacy of the colonial legacy and has a lingering resonance with the current cultural framing of the veiled Afghan woman. Compellingly, Kabbani (1994) emphasises inherited representations are persistent and damaging and “writes the other into existence”. She claims, echoing the concepts of pentimento, negative representations “are
continually being reinvested with new life” (p. 34). Similarly, negative visual images of veiled Afghan women impede serious contemporary discussions about the history and nature of human suffering in Afghanistan. The choreographed visual image of veiled women means that “we don’t see the pain of others” (Razack, 2007, p. 386). I argue that the rebuff and omission of Streeton’s painting of Fatma Habibi, the Muslim Other, in Australian art corresponds with the omission of acknowledgement towards the early Afghan explorers and their contribution to the overland explorations, as dictated by an entrenched undercurrent of Islamophobia in Australia.

I have utilised an image of a Muslim women from the past to inform the future and I have substantiated the case by defining the Orientalist memory, an enduring legacy which engages with what Said (1935–2003) has more recently referred to as Neo-Orientalism or Orientalism once more (Said, 2004). Neo-Orientalism is a form of racism that has metaphorically painted out the residue of war that has caused Afghan women to flee from their homeland. In other words, such ideologies have legitimised power imbalances and yet contribute to conditions that benefit some at the expense of others. For example, the Orientalist narrative legitimises military action in Afghanistan by the West and helps to place the Taliban’s ascent to power and aggressive misogynistic practices outside the historical context of Western complicity. Reiterating my earlier discussion, there is often silence about Western government interference in Afghanistan (Nash, 2011).

The desire to distance oneself from Islam is a recurring theme. Absent in Western literature is reference to Western complicity in sustaining Afghan tribal fanaticism, and using Islam for purposes of power in the process almost totalling ignoring the plight of Afghan women (Nash, 2011, p64).

The Orientalist memory
McCredden (2009) claims that “memory cannot simply be relegated to a closed page or a dusty vault. Memory works through a haunting, a melancholy which moves beyond” (p. 66). In other words, memory can find shape in the future. We view the past from the present, prejudiced by a subjective standpoint. The aim here is to employ specialised knowledge to challenge what I call the Orientalist memory that sustains anti-Muslim sentiment in contemporary Australia and characterises the
stereotypical perceptions of the Muslim Other. I define the Orientalist memory as a kind of amnesia. A lack of historical remembering reminiscent of our Euro-centric past, the Orientalist memory has a haunting that has denied past equality. To put it another way, the past is coloured by our personal perspective and recollections so that it is presented uniquely as no one else has seen it.

I was curious, as I have said earlier, about Streeton’s association with Fatma, the subject of the painting. Streeton’s work has been discussed and published extensively. An assessment of this visual representation assisted me to locate a theoretical philosophy. I have found contradictory literature that informs the Orientalist representation and exaggerates the cultural misunderstanding of the Muslim Other dictated by nineteenth century hegemony (Said, 1979; Nochlin, 1989; Çelik, 1996; Benjamin, 2003). This provided alternative ways of seeing what had not been seen in visual images in the past. For example, Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism are oppressive in the sense that they do not promote equal human rights. I agree with Butler (2003) and Rashid (2008) that this approach obscures the West’s interference in the Afghan conflict and fails to recognise the precariousness of warfare that silences the Afghan women’s experience of conflict. In other words, Neo-Orientalism is analogous to Streeton’s silent and still visual representation of a colonised subject and it is this enduring silence that informs and aggrandises the subconscious bias of the Orientalist memory.

Under the umbrella of Western hegemony and Neo-Orientalism, this present-day discourse triggers the Orientalist memory that has a lot in common with the colonial discourse of previous centuries. This plays into the anti-Muslim rhetoric of contemporary Australia. The chronicles by Western journalists that justified the occupation of Afghanistan by America and its allies were frequently manipulated and deliberately obscured by our government; biasing the news reports especially as a polling issue where asylum seekers were positioned as illiterate and innumerate; these reports

overlooked the fact their literacy is in other languages. The most compelling evidence of Western hegemony relates to the attacks on Afghanistan after the acts of violence on America’s Twin Towers. In the name of revenge for the 11th September attack, the image of Afghan women in the blue burqa became the icon of veiled women and today stands for the enigma of cultural difference. This lead to the current representation and homogenisation of Australian Muslims, despite their ethnicity, and unconcernedly dismisses the actual experiences of the Afghan people as unimportant.

**Representations of veiled Afghan women in contemporary Western media**

What does an image of a veiled Afghan woman imply in the twenty-first century? This question demands a methodical consideration into the historical symbolism of how visual representations of veiled women were manipulated by Western society to justify conflict in the Persian Gulf 1990-1991 and Afghanistan in 2001, (Bailey & Tawadros, 2003). Historic dominance and tension was further reinforced when, after the attacks on America’s Twin Towers, similar strategies were stage-managed by the wives of world leaders to capitalise on the pervading fear of terror. Abu-Lughod (2002) refers to Laura Bush, the wife of the American President George W. Bush, whose presentation succinctly captivated Western perspectives that were infused with strong feminist emotions. Her speech enlisted American women to justify American bombing and intervention in Afghanistan and to make a case for the war on terror of which Afghanistan was allegedly a part. Laura Bush said:

> Because of our recent military gains in much of Afghanistan, women are no longer imprisoned in their homes. They can listen to music and teach their daughters without fear of punishment ... The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women. (Abu-Lughod, 2002, p. 784)

Just a few days later, Cherie Blair (Fig. 21), a Queen’s Counsel, part-time judge, and at the time, the wife of the British Prime Minister, who spent much of her career focusing on human rights issues, conducted a briefing at 10 Downing Street in London, “she spoke publicly ... about the lack of women’s rights in Afghanistan” (Carland 2017 p, 15). It was unusual because the purpose of the briefing was so Blair could lift the veil for Afghan women. Showing her distain, Blair mimics the masking of Muslim women which questions her human rights responsibility. Clearly it was a
demonstration of alliance to support American politics, making the point that Afghan women had been oppressed by the Taliban years before the West decided to get involved (Butler, 2003).

Theorists such as Ahmed-Ghosh (2003), Abu-Lughod (2002), Butler (2003), Nochlin (1989), Razack (2004), Spivak (1996) and Jordan-Zachery (2007) argue that we live in a privileged world, and we might examine our actions in relation to the hyper-visible position in which Afghan women have found themselves. Such seditious rhetoric of salvation reinforces a sense of arrogance, and violence: as Spivak (1996) has cynically put it, white men saving brown women from brown men. Spivak asks, are we not part of that world? The visual image of a veiled woman, the Muslim Other, as seen in (Fig. 3), inspired my research with a view to identify how visual images of Muslim Afghan women have been operationalised and perpetuated as a threat to the Australian ethos in the wars of terror.

Contemporary Australia, a priori knowledge

I assert that some researchers make a convincing case for a priori knowledge which is independent of experience. Of course, not all certainties can be justified a priori, nor can they be justified as only empirically. The literature about the early Muslims in Australia, viewed through the lens of Orientalism, I believe, makes a convincing case, although some researchers do not consider this as a possibility worth exploring. This appears to be the origin of why contemporary Australian Muslims consider this as the basis of a racist paradigm, one that judged the Muslim cameleers as nefarious and
afforded them little consideration because their cultural group did not fit in with the moral values of colonialist Australia. To emphasise this point, the criteria of the White Australia Policy and the hierarchies of Anglocentric supremacy mandated the assimilation of post-war non-Anglo Europeans (Greek and Italians)\textsuperscript{11} to preserve the Australian way of life. Fluctuations of political émigrés in the first decade of the twenty-first century warranted relocation from countries of the Indian subcontinent, Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan, which has added to the diversity of Australian social culture.

For the most part, as I have shown, the Muslim presence in Australia is not a recent phenomenon; a major intake of Muslims took place in the 1970s with Turkish Muslim immigrants followed by Lebanese immigrants. Researchers such as Dreher and Ho (2009) show how post-war immigrants also have a great deal in common with the dominant messages in the media that position the Muslim Other as threatening in the eyes of many Australians.

Our western culture polarises representation of Afghan women as victims of political oppression, as the face of terror or as being a threat to Australia’s national security; I anticipate the oral histories of Afghan women will contest dominant representations of the veiled woman in contemporary Australia and challenge the perceived boundaries of the Muslim Other and the rhetoric of ‘them’ and ‘us’. Orientalism operates in the following text and explores the specificity of the imagery that is viewed through the eyes of Australia’s western society with the intention to see things from an antithetical position. I engage with the nineteenth century image of \textit{Fatma Habibi} (Fig. 1) by Streeton (Benjamin 1997) to validate the Orientalist lens or the framework western cultures have used for centuries, to stereotype people from unfamiliar cultural backgrounds (Carland p, 39).

This discussion views the image of a veiled woman from opposed perspectives. Drawing on the works of theorists such as Kabbani (1986), Nochlin (1989), Çelik (1996), and Said (1979), I bring into focus imagery that triggers the Orientalist memory; imagery which engages with a Neo-Orientalist

\textsuperscript{11} My Greek husband arrived in Australia in 1956 and his Greek name was anglicised to comply with the rules of assimilation.
discourse embedded in cultural representations that dominate and demean the Muslim Other in contemporary Australia.

Orientalism is very much tied to the tumultuous dynamics of contemporary history. I emphasize that neither the term Orient nor the concept of the West has any ontological stability; each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other. That these supreme fictions lend themselves easily to manipulation and the organization of collective passion has never been more evident than in our time, when the mobilization of fear, hatred, disgust and resurgent self-pride and arrogance is being uncritically perpetuated — and much of it having to do with Islam and the Arabs on one side, ‘we’ Westerners on the other (Said 2004, p. 870).

Art theorist, Benjamin (2003) has explored the cultural implications of Orientalist imagery. His exhibition Orientalism Delacroix to Klee juxtaposed compelling traditional interpretations of historical canonical art that conformed in the nineteenth century to well established rules of the English and French Art Academies. The connections between the academies and the state were vital in nurturing emerging artists in painting and sculpture, the ‘academies’ were the pinnacle of aspiration to nineteenth-century Orientalist artists. The result of this is that Streeton’s painting of the veiled woman Fatma Habibi, part of this exhibition, was documented as an Orientalist work.

In this context, Çelik was invited to speak at Benjamin’s Orientalist exhibition at the AGNSW in 1997. Beaulieu and Roberts, (2002, p. 11) described how Çelik contrasted the politics of the colonialist with the politics of the post-colonialists. Çelik indicated the exoticisation of local Middle East inhabitants through the lens of difference, and challenged our basic assumptions about the value attached to the visual representation of the Other. Interpreting indigenous art forms in the context of their cultural history masks the profound differences between East and West. Beaulieu and Roberts (2002) document Çelik’s emphasis by Western dominance. By reading the theoretical works of Said (1979) and of post-colonial art historians (Nochlin, 1989; Çelik, 1992; Kabbani, 1994; Çelik, 1996), I have undertaken an analysis of cultural phenomena from the perspective of one who has a history within the culture being studied; Çelik, a distinguished participant in the Orientalist debate,
offers another view and shifts the focus from an individual Western epistemology that informs anti-Muslim sentiment in Australia; by proposing a more expansive vision of universal justice.

Kabbani, the author of *Europe’s Myths of Orient* which was originally published in 1986, claims the east was symbolically constructed to establish European hegemony. To disentangle earlier concepts that the east is morally inferior, Kabbani (1994) intimately observes the work of the Orientalist. She pinpoints aspects from that era that persist in fuelling the tense climate between the east and west as defined in Said’s (1979) discourse of Orientalism. She achieves this by analysing the sometimes-absurd interpretations made by the British and French colonialists, thereby emphasising and explaining the misinterpretations and myths between the Imperialists and Muslims. In so doing, she uncovers the contradictory discourse and dialogue that writes or paints the other into being.

The gaze into the Orient had turned, as in a convex mirror, to reflect the Occident that had produced it. (Kabbani, 1986, p. 85)

In the above passage, Kabbani seems to be suggesting that the Orientalist displayed both foreboding at cultural difference and a profound fascination in terms of the vibrancy of the east, some enthusiasm and *joie de vivre* that their Victorian culture had repressed. In her role as art historian, Kabbani reveals what has been obscured by empirical and pragmatic knowledge of the colonialist and imperialist narratives for centuries. To emphasise, the Orientalist artist’s imagination embellished the Orient and the Oriental woman from a distant culture with artistic licence judging the Other’s moral and social values. This is evident in the famous painting *The Snake Charmer* by Jean-Léon Gérôme (1880). Edward Said used this painting on the back cover of his book *Orientalism* (Fig. 22) and both Kabbani (1994) and Nochlin (1989) suggest the painting is a fantasy. The point I am making here, is how the Orientalist invented a scenario that predominated representation. This explanation that can be likened to the Neo-Orientalist’s image of the Afghan woman in a burqa, thus judging the veiled woman as the face of oppression and the face of war.
Kabbani’s (1986) graphic descriptions of the Orientalist visual narratives identifies new arguments connecting new threads that contradict each other by bringing into focus the half-truths of the eurocentric Orientalist and the tensions depicted between the Eastern exotic sexualised Other and the exploited Other. Çelik (1996), and Nochlin (1989) attempt to broaden contemporary understanding of the Orientalist visual image by associating the intersection of gendered theory and Orientalism, and how it has distanced the fantasy of colonialists. Complicating the contextualisation of political significance in cross-cultural intersections, refracted through the lens of the visual language of the Orientalist. The point here, is to show again how images of Afghan women, this time veiled by Western media are incarnations of the Orientalist genre distancing, silencing and misrepresenting Muslim women. The allure of the new Orientalist as Said (2004) has suggested holds critical importance today as the desire for some feminists is only in the unveiling of Muslim women. The negative attitudes towards veiled women explains the belief that Islam is essentially oppressive.
Conclusion

The prominent rhetorical paronomasia of women by Laura Bush and Cherie Blair, their play on words, relies on our perception of traditional female roles in contemporary Western society that opposes ancient tribal patriarchal practices in Muslim societies. This illustrates how Western popular media were susceptible to spin doctors to produce and traffic a masculinised battlefront to obscure the terror of war as experienced by Afghan women as opposed to the cultural and political war on terror.
Chapter Five: Methodology, a rationale for using an inductive qualitative approach
Chapter Five: Methodology, a rationale for using an inductive qualitative approach

This chapter firstly details the theoretical lenses of literature theory and intersectionality that underpin this qualitative research. It then provides the rationale for using a qualitative inductive research framing and the methods of art-based workshops, interviews, visual images and reflective narrative to gather the research data in a sensitive manner. I go on to describe the challenges of recruiting Afghan women into my research program, the ethical issues involved and the interactions between myself and the women as we engaged in working alongside each other to build understanding through our artistic endeavours.

Introduction

The complementary value of using diverse modes of data collection recognizes this (Given, 2017) as an inductive qualitative study, I use unstructured interviews, both audio-recorded and unrecorded, reflective narrative, arts-based workshops and visual analysis to help explore and (re)present the voices of Streeton’s and others’ nameless images of Afghan women. The participating women’s oral history, their epistemology in narrative form, in combination with the data analysis and writing weave together to produce insights into the lived reality of these Afghan women.

Five of the participating women in my research had never worn a burqa in Afghanistan, the other three women were subjected to wearing the burqa before they were able to flee the waring parties in Afghanistan. Even today in Afghanistan, many women still wear the burqa for personal security reasons (Fig. 9). I work with Afghan women now living in Australia who experienced life from what Liamputtong (2010) terms a bi-cultural perspective by combining the cultural and customs of two nations. The participating Afghan women have experienced the residue and devastation of warfare complicated by Western hegemony that loudly protests the actions of the Russian (1979–1989), the mujahdeen (1989–1994) and the Taliban (1996–2001) regimes. I am interested in the gender issues Afghan women have had to face within the Afghan patriarchal and masculine culture,
as well as the political rhetoric and racial discrimination Afghan women experience in Australia, as informed from post-colonial sensibilities.

A qualitative inductive approach

The inductive approach begins with an empirical observation and requires the researcher to gather data relevant to the topic of interest and then theorise the emerging patterns. This is the opposite of a deductive approach, that begins with a theory, a hypothesis, and then collects and analyses data to test the hypothesis. From a visual-arts perspective for instance, Streeton’s painting of Fatma Habibi and the silent video still of an Afghan woman in a burqa triggered my interest in the oral histories of the veiled Afghan women living in Australia. After collecting data, patterns began to develop, and theories came into play to interpret these patterns. The principles and foundation for qualitative inductive research is shown in the following table, as informed by the work of Blackstone (2012).

Table 1. The principles and foundation of qualitative research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gather data</th>
<th>Look for patterns</th>
<th>Develop a theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific level of focus</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>General level of focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After consulting with existing literature, judgement is suspended about conclusions to allow for new and innovative insights.</td>
<td>It is necessary to keep a front-and-centre focus on the goal of building a vibrant indicative model in theoretical terms.</td>
<td>This allows additional consultations with the literature to refine articulation of emergent trends and concepts that in turn afford an extraordinary voice to the participants who are deemed as knowledgeable informants.</td>
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Table 2 is based on the work of Minichiello, Aroni, Neville and Alexandra (1995, p. 10). I use a qualitative research approach as I am concerned with understanding the life of the Afghan woman from her perspective, to uncover thoughts and feelings, motives, meanings, and actions or reactions of the informant in her day-to-day life in Australia. I consider how Afghan women have been portrayed for decades; the negative perceptions Afghan women are exposed to and how these are
enforced through popular media that communicates *all* Afghans as the Taliban, and warlords - and thus a threat to international stability.

**Table 2. Strengths of a qualitative approach**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative</th>
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</table>
| Conceptual | • Concerned with understanding human behaviour from the informant’s perspective  
• Assumes dynamic and negotiated reality |
| Methodology | • Data are collected through participant observation and unstructured interviews  
• Data are analysed by themes from descriptions by informants  
• Data are reported in the language of the informant |
| Methods used | • Arts-based enquiry  
• Interviews  
• Reflective narrative |

**A qualitative art-based research inquiry**

Arts-based research examines standpoint epistemologies that see the world from the point of view of oppressed persons – this includes persons of colour, women, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons; based in critical race theories and social justice, such research helps to progress political movements (Knichlooe, 2001; Knowles & Coles, 2008). In particular I have engaged with the work of Welsby (2009), who used a qualitative art-based research inquiry with women living with an intellectual disability. She explores issues of exclusion/inclusion in her thesis through the lens of an outsider. She stresses how the research, visual image-making, and the dialogue were fundamental components of her research process. Welsby found an arts-based qualitative
research process enabled her to work closely with participants and progress her inquiry. Qualitative scholars suggest that the common elements of qualitative interviews are best described as a face-to-face verbal exchange in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or an expression of opinion or belief from another person or persons (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, and Alexander, 1995, p. 62).

Similarly, Lather and Smithies (1997) use multiple voices - polyvocality - different textual formats, and various typefaces to engage with different layers and sources of data, including information about HIV/AIDS, researcher’s reflections, and women’s stories. Using diverse sources of data results in “an ensemble of fragments waiting for the alchemy of response from readers” (Lather & Smithies, 1997, p. 201). This form of research facilitates one person to walk in the shoes of another. Wadds (2013) used participant observation to research the night-time drinking culture in Sydney, Australia, from a criminal justice perspective. Wadds claims “a major use of qualitative sources and approaches seems best suited ... because it favours rich, authentic accounts of social actors and ‘characters’ through the ‘artful’ production of complex narratives and descriptive illustrations” (2013, p. 22). He used in-depth interviews to elicit a deeper understanding of the subjective aspects of night life to collect data that included a wide range of idiosyncratic points of perspective.

I also acknowledge the influence of Carland’s (2017) recent work. She is an Australian Muslim academic and television personality who interviewed an assembly of Muslim women from Australian and America championing how sexism was being challenged all the time within diaspora Muslim communities. She analysed her position as an Australian and a convert to Islam, describing her position as being from an “outsider’s distance” (p. 8). More effectively, she articulated the nuances of dancing between the dichotomy of her positions amidst the conjecture of Australians when they learn she had not converted for marriage and the assumptions from all sides about her faith and her position as a Muslim woman, as well as her place in the religious teachings of Islam. I am inspired by her claim, “an individual can shift between the two positions in a single piece of research, and even be both at the same time, depending on the issues at hand and the person being interviewed” (p. 8).
Interviews

For my own research, qualitative interviews were the most appropriate to elicit life history interviews. By overlaying different elements of interviewing techniques germane to the research, the interviews worked in concert with an inductive qualitative methodology, thus producing a richer narrative of experience. I used in-depth interviews in my research to enable a comprehensive, fine-detailed knowledge about the topic and to illuminate how surface appearances can be quite misleading. The different elements of interviews are acknowledged in Table 3, adapted from Minichiello, Aroni, Neville and Alexander (1995, p. 62).

Table 3. Characteristics: the fundamentals of interviewing practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structured Interviews</th>
<th>Focused or Semi-structured interviews</th>
<th>Unstructured interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structured interviews</td>
<td>In-depth interviews</td>
<td>In-depth interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey interviews</td>
<td>Survey interviews</td>
<td>Clinical interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Interviews</td>
<td>Group interviews</td>
<td>Group interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oral or life history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflective narrative

I share the same opinion as Tillman (2002, p. 4), who suggests that culturally sensitive approaches in research can use the cultural knowledge and understanding of the researcher and the participants in the collection and interpretation of data. Concerned with understanding the informant’s perspective, I write a personal narrative, a short ethnography drawn from my travel dairy and memories of my 2005 visit to the Panjshir Valley, Afghanistan. It is necessary to appreciate that this was/is narrated from the position of a privileged white Australian Anglo-Celtic Catholic woman. This is recounted to allow the reader to comprehend the remoteness of village women and provide a background to classic patriarchy practices that many of the participating women have experienced. The following excerpt also explains my cautiousness in selecting appropriate methods to gather research data from Afghan women now residing in Australia.
The Panjshir Valley, 2005

This constituency was the home of Ahmad Shah Massoud, the Northern Alliance leader. The Panjshir Valley was a strategic objective between the mujahedeen and the Taliban. Massoud was known as the Lion of Panjshir, his image was plastered on huge billboards, shop fronts, and damaged buildings. He was killed on 10th September 2001 by suicide bombers who posed as journalists, hiding explosives in camera bags, to kill Massoud and those around him and themselves.

On the way to meet the family of an Afghan friend, our group had to drive for several hours through a narrow rocky gorge that proceeded up to the valley. Gradually the road widened to reveal carefully tended fields of wheat and maize dotted with villages before leading up to the Hindu Kush Mountains. The driver left the main road on the way to our evening stopover, we travelled over creek beds and through small villages before the road became so narrow we had to leave the car and walk to our destination.

Meandering along a narrow pathway through the fields towards a canopy of walnut and mulberry groves, I was greeted by a serene vision. It was late afternoon; the sun was low and profiled young women in traditional village dress and hijab collecting water. In single file, they weaved their way through and around the large mulberry trees. They stopped at a shady spot where the water cascaded down a rocky ledge, and one-by-one lowered the water containers from their heads and, for a brief time, chatted and giggled as each in turn filled her container. They each placed the heavy water vessel atop their heads. Their graceful movements were mesmerising as they glided back up the gentle slopes to their village (Fig. 23). High in the mountainous regions and fertile valleys of the Panjshir region, these women, as members of a peasant-tribal society governed by patriarchal elders and shielded by high mud-walled compounds abide by strict Muslim religious codes of purdah; women cover their faces and lower their gaze in front of men and strangers and spend most of their time engaged in basic food production.
In this tranquil setting, I saw firsthand how even the sight of a camera was enough to frighten and upset the village women: they covered their faces, they shook their heads to indicate they did not wish to be photographed, and hurried away. I learned later their fear was not of the camera but the implications of the camera. Our Afghan guide explained they understood they could not control how their photographic image may be characterised. They were fearful of who might see the image, of what meaning people in the village would attach to the image, and the intentions of the photographer. Following purdah, a misdemeanour for these women could result in shaming the family, leaving a young woman no chance of marriage. Young or old, dishonour by inference or implication in these remote regions equated to the possibility of a crime of passion that could end in death.
Having seen the culture of village life in Afghanistan firsthand, I deliberated if photovoice and/or photo-elicitation were the most appropriate methods for my cross-cultural research of Afghan women living in Australia. Photovoice is more appropriate for educational active research and requires training for the participants to be involved in the process. Photo-elicitation is used to provoke a response (Meyer & Kroeger, 2005). I recognised the strong ethical considerations in my research - to give a voice to the ‘other’ and be sensitive to diverse cultural traditions. From an ethical standpoint, I decided to use just a few aspects of photography (tourist snapshots) as a means of gathering contextual data about Afghan women’s lives in Afghanistan.

Ethics
Ethics approval for this research was given by Western Sydney University Human Ethics committee (H9289).

The researcher’s voice - Ethical considerations
It is essential to acknowledge the participating women’s stories are shaped and re-told through my own positioning; while I attempt to balance my voice, the voice of whiteness and its privileged position, with the voice of the Muslim Other; while I am not able to see through the eyes of Afghan women, I can see through my own eyes. From this position I argue that the Afghan women’s oral histories offer Australian women, Muslim and non-Muslim, an expanded feminist consciousness, a way for women everywhere to make sense of their world. For me/us to identify with Afghan Muslim women, I/we need to understand the interruptions and complications they experience, instead of unthinkingly condemning the actions and behaviours of the stereotypical Muslim Other.

12 Photo-voice in a relatively new data collection method, it allows individuals to explore their daily experiences and to produce a visual picture of their experience. Photo-voice provides an insight and understanding of the participants values and the importance they attach to the images.
13 Photo-elicitation evokes a deeper element of awareness. The aim is to draw out a response, to prod at memory to produce knowledge of something we have experienced, or something we once knew
How my Christian faith informs an understanding of the Afghan Women’s Islamic faith

As a white, Anglo-Celtic, Christian woman, I am mindful of how the research methodology might conflict with religious practices of the Afghan women’s Islamic faith. I am also mindful of the “many covert communication barriers between participants and researchers that lead to misunderstandings ... Some of those barriers are related to cultural aspects such as language differences and religious dogma” (Escobedo, Guerrero, Lujan, Ramirez & Serrano, 2007, p. 1. See also Liamputtong, 2010 and Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). For example, even though many Australians may not identify as religious, Australian society has a long association with the traditions of Christianity. Public holidays include Christian holy days and are celebrated across the nation, for example, Christmas Day, Good Friday, and Easter Monday, and every Sunday is a day of religious observance for Christians. Easter is a time of fasting, reflection, and almsgiving; I therefore respect that Ramadan is a significant spiritual period for Muslims; it too is a time of fasting, prayer, charity-giving, and a time for self-reflection and Friday is the Muslim prayer day.

The research implementation

Recruitment

I was interested in recruiting and speaking with Afghan women who came to Australia because of the Russian occupation in Afghanistan (1979–1989), or during the Taliban regime. Given my language limitations as a mono-lingual English speaker, I considered the first requirement for my research was to recruit women over the age of 18 and able to communicate in conversational English.

Building trust

For these reasons, it was imperative to provide a safe setting for Afghan women to participate and contribute to the data collecting for this research project. For Afghan women, a public profile is the antithesis of Afghan cultural practice, where gender controls private and public lives on nearly every level. Building trust was therefore vital when unveiling Afghan Muslim feminist epistemology and sharing knowledge that has been derived from family, thoughts, and memories of succeeding
generations through tribal and kinfolk analogies. The participatory paradigm based on an objective-subjective co-operative approach undertaken by the researcher shares social and cultural characteristics with the participating Afghan women, thereby reducing the voice of the colonialist. The fact that I had visited Afghanistan both surprised and delighted the women as did the visual images in Persian of the art exhibition I had organised in Khabul (as discussed in the Foreword). They were also comfortable that I had some appreciation of Islam through my extended family. My *prori* knowledge of the domestic life and masculine culture experienced by Afghan women in Afghanistan was therefore helpful, and appreciated. It also meant I was more quickly able to build trust with my participants and by using cultural knowledge gained from my visits to Afghanistan, the participants’ country of origin, I facilitated the women’s interest in my research project.

**Research considerations**

I was aware issues may emerge through the research process because of the participants’ varying levels of English, which also meant varying levels of understanding; that expecting the participants to comply and answer all the research questions in English might be fanciful. To ensure the optimal setting for the Afghan women to recount their experiences I had to consider whether I should use an interpreter. I know from personal experience the use of translators and interpreters can affect the results researchers obtain from their participants. I decided to rely on trust and honesty as a measure of respect in orchestrating the study. I also had to consider how Afghan women are obliged to follow the Afghan code of conduct in Sharia Law. In this context, a woman witness is considered half the worth and reliability of a male witness.

*Imam Ali’s sermon 79 in Nahj alBalaqeh has helped to shape gender norms among Shia Muslims:* “O people, women are deficient in belief, inheritance and wisdom. Their deficiency in belief is due to not praying and fasting during menses; their deficiency in wisdom is that witness of two women equals one man and in inheritance is that their share is half of men’s” (Moghadam, 2002, p, 1156).
Furthermore, some Australians advocate an anti-Muslim point of view. This arguably compounded recruiting participants as a lot of Afghan women will not offer their point of view to an Australian researcher about their experience of re-locating to Australia, particularly if it is deemed to demonstrate social impiety by family members. At the same time, researchers are bound to protect the mental and physical rights and safety of research participants who may wish to remain silent. Most of the Afghan women found it difficult at times to comprehend the purpose of some questions and at times disengaged. In these circumstances, the obvious and respectful response I felt, was to honour the situation and accept their stories as they articulated them.

Ethics: informed and signed consent forms
Striking a balance between the ethics approval from the University of Western Sydney and the cross-cultural nature of researching Afghan women was difficult at first. On one hand, the women were vulnerable because of their limited English. The women knew they were at risk of misinterpretation and misrepresentation, which had the capacity to cause further tension and anxiety within their Afghan community. All participating women signed consent forms to tell their story, however they were not aware the researcher also engaged with other indirect measures of collecting and analysing data, as discussed in Chapter 2. This was decided so as not to affect the participants usual disposition. It was also imperative to de-identify the participants because of Pashtunwali, the Afghan code of honour that acknowledges ancestry, gender boundaries, and religious-ethnic identity (as discussed in Chapter Three). Therefore, each participating woman was given a pseudonym.

Arts-based workshops
The research involved four art-based, art-enabling workshops, each of 2–3 hours duration and using textile art to trigger one-on-one interviews to explore the research question -What is the reality behind the visual representation of the veiled Afghan woman in the blue burqa, and how do Afghan women recount their experience of cultural and political warfare now that they reside in Australia? Offering arts-based workshops, and engaging with and observing participants facilitated a non-threatening and
unobtrusive social environment. The processes of accessing and recruiting research participants and then implementing the arts-based workshops and interviews are detailed below.

**A negative response to my art-based research proposal**

Recruiting research participants was unexpectedly difficult. Throughout the recruitment period, while I was promoting interest and responding to questions and inquiries from gatekeepers, caseworkers and directors of government agencies, I began to process in my mind the objections that had been raised. The first difficulty was because the project did not fit with the caseworker’s program. The second was an Afghan woman who passionately suggested I should be researching women and children in Afghan jails; I was left wondering what her experience might have been in Afghanistan. The third was a male casework director, a convert to Islam who spoke to me seriously about the values of Islam and showed little interest in my research with and on Afghan women. The final difficulty was overcoming previous negative experiences because, as the Afghan Caseworker explained women had been used in previous needlework and fashion programs unfavourably; a group of Hazara women had spent many hours hand-embroidering fashion apparel for a fashion designer only to rate a bare mention in the promotion of the garments. The implications of commercial exploitation disguised as research thwarted the research process for following research assignments. In this context, it was understandable that women who had been involved in ambiguous self-promotional and covert projects were unresponsive to participating in another research project.

I enlisted the help of family and friends to locate Afghan women in Sydney, but it was fate that played a hand when I was arranging a flight to Kabul, Afghanistan. In 2011, there were just two routes you could take from Australia to Kabul, one via Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the other via Pakistan. The Afghan Embassy in Canberra, which arranged my visa into Afghanistan, suggested a travel agency in Dandenong and this information proved valuable in terms of recruiting Afghan women into my research. I communicated with the Migrant Resource Centre in that region who had previous dealings with an older and more established community of Afghan people.
The non-response from government agencies and straight-out rejection of my art-based research proposal bothered me. I wondered what I needed to do to achieve a better response. As an art practitioner, I see making things as a stimulating activity and an essential part of my well-being. I wanted to identify with Afghan women, so, in the sense of the Kincheleo’s bricoleur (2001 p. 687) using bits of this and that, I focused on using elements of Afghan domestic culture in a contemporary Australian art project. However, I recognized it may be difficult to persuade the caseworkers and/or gatekeepers to enrol Afghan women into my research project. I considered the boundary work that goes beyond race and ethnicity provided by the various Migrant Resource Centres and how I might incorporate the caseworkers in collaboration, knitting them together in a metaphorical manner so they could see an occasion of self-esteem and recognition for their own department. Over the winter months, I immersed myself in the crafts of knitting and crocheting as I deliberated the situation. I share my experience in the following vignette.

As my recruitment was stalling, I felt the need to develop my research recruitment strategies in another direction. I began to experiment with the notion of the bricoleur and the aesthetic materials of domestic craft; using odds and ends of wool, fabric, and plastic shopping bags, I started to create, knit, and crochet. It was winter time in Sydney, when the days were short and cold. I knitted sweaters for my two teenage granddaughters. After these garments were completed, I realized that I enjoyed the more free-form work where I could make something without conforming to a pattern.

The art of constructing something from whatever bits and pieces were on hand seemed sensible: the de-constructive and unruly and seditious methodology I experimented with is known as freeform, handmade knitting and crocheting. There were no patterns, no right and wrong, no rules, and there were no limits, just raw edges and ragged trimmings ... Much like the female artists I saw at CCAA in Kabul, I worked with what I had. So humbly the tattered edges of worn-out and discarded fabric grace the handmade flower (Fig. 24)

I brushed up on my limited crochet skills. I crocheted a tote bag and knitted recycled fabrics, I crocheted flowers from recycled plastic bags (Fig. 25) and bits and pieces of acrylic and woollen thread. I crocheted for-get-me-knots from blue plastic bags. Serendipitously, the arts-based project shifted from my initial thoughts of traditional needlework and textiles skills in a contemporary art form to freeform knitting and crocheting. I updated the information sheet
with images of the freeform crochet work using recycled plastic bags, to assist with future recruitment. I felt more confident to engage with government agencies. A Sydney caseworker professed that the offer of social interaction would benefit Afghan women in their local communities and the idea of using recycled plastic bags captured their imagination. My focus then shifted to the interviewing process.

Recruitment, phase 1
I sought to recruit participants by sending a flyer describing the workshop activities and a consent form asking interested Afghan women to contact me; the form also explained they
would be required to sign if they agreed to be interviewed. These forms were emailed to the offices of local Migrant Research Centres in both Sydney and Melbourne. I was familiar with these services because of my art practice that supported and embraced cultural diversity. There are many Migrant Resource Centres and other government bodies that deal with the diversity of immigration, they provide services for refugees and humanitarian entrants. They employ bilingual workers to increase the new arrivals local knowledge and offer settlement advice and referral services for wellbeing. Migrant Research Centres often work in partnership with regional service providers to develop an awareness and capacity to address equity and participation, and to enhance the capacity of migrants to participate in the wider Australian society.

The initial communication from the Melbourne caseworker was guarded. It was expressed several times by the caseworker that the Afghan women would expect payment. To address this concern, I sent a communication that set out the university ethics guideline and an account of the funding that had been approved for the research project. The funding covered the venue site, materials, and refreshments as well as travel requirements. This information ultimately satisfied the caseworker. I then planned for the first meet-and-greet with Afghan women in Victoria.

All research participants were briefed about the nature and purpose of the interviews, assured that they could withdraw from the research at any time, and that their anonymity would be protected. In addition, they were presented with a list of support services if issues arose for them (see Appendices for Participant Information and Participant Permission Form). At the close of fieldwork, no adverse effects on participants were reported to the researcher.

**Meet-and-Greet Victoria**

The first meet-and-greet was in the municipality of the City of Casey, some 42 kilometres south east of Melbourne central business district. Established in 1994, the city has a diverse population estimated at 261,198. In the 2006 Census, there were 1,703 Afghans residing in the City of Casey, with 146,922 people from non-English speaking backgrounds indicating the effect of
multiculturalism in the city (Chippett, 2006). The Melbourne cohort consisted of Pashtun and Tajik women. Pashtun is defined as an ethnic group within populations in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Tajik people speak a variety of Persian, as spoken in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, that is closely related to Dari Persian.

The caseworker from the Migrant Resource Centre, an Australian woman, sat in on our meet-and-greet meeting. It was obvious that the Afghan women trusted her and were relying on her judgement and guidance as to whether they should participate in the research program. The caseworker had already distributed the information sheet and consent forms so that the Afghan women had prior information about the research. This organisation had a young Afghan woman staff member who was prepared to translate or interpret if the Afghan women needed translation or explanation.

We were shown into a side room where we sat around a table and I introduced myself. I explained the purpose of the research, what the art-based research entailed, and my responsibilities as a researcher. I envisaged that the art-based workshops would be an engaging participatory experience in which participants could discuss and reflect on the vibrant and colourful needlework skills and textile history, beaded textile, textile weaving, carpet design and carpet weaving, and traditional and tribal jewellery. These are time-honoured skills, passed down from generation to generation from mother to daughter that have almost been lost in the current conflict in Afghanistan. I was interested in the skills the women had brought with them from Afghanistan.

I had put together a cultural probe to help overcome any initial awkwardness (probes are appropriate when you need to gather information for a thorough inquiry with minimal influence on participants) (Hanks, 1979, p. 1165). As an introduction, I had grouped together Afghan handmade embroidered souvenirs, jewellery, and tourist snapshots of my stay in Afghanistan, documentation of my recent artwork, art installations, and the art program that I had initiated with Afghan women at the Centre for Contemporary Art Afghanistan to tangibly convey my interest and knowledge about their culture. I included a large poster printed in Persian that provided detailed information about the art exhibition in Kabul, Afghanistan in 2011 (Fig. 26). The probe
was effective; the women were familiar with the Persian text and knew the Kabul suburb that the exhibition had been held in. They were eager to know my thoughts about their country. They wanted to know if things had changed in Kabul, they asked was it safe now and if I liked Afghan food? One of the participants became enthusiastic to tell her story when she knew I had stayed in Kabul: “I can tell you my story, I came by smuggler”, she said.

Figure 26. An invitation to an exhibition of Australian art work at the Centre for Contemporary Art Afghanistan in 2011 at Kart-e-char/Soryah High School Road, near to Rahbeh-e-Balkhe High School, Kabul.

I observed the women’s skills and made notes. Most of the women crocheted loofah mitts from coarse yarn for the bathroom. One of the older women, a retired school teacher, said that she loved reading and writing in Persian. Another woman with a small daughter said that she liked to knit and crochet. The matriarch of the group, Nasifah, although very active within the Afghan community, explained that her eyesight was failing and declined to participate in the art activities. I was aware during our initial interactions I was being assessed by the participating women in Victoria. After a brief time, I could sense the women relaxing. I even recognised the signs of approval. As a group we discussed where we would have the workshops and what we would do at
the workshops as well as how the interviews would be recorded. It was agreed we would meet the following month in the Progress Hall for the first workshop.

I gained the impression that Nasifah would hold me to account in the workshops. I felt an intimate connection to her, from “my position as a woman” (Liamputtong, 2010, p. 126). Her steely resolve and resourcefulness was remarkable; she was familiar with the resource services available through government organisations, domestic violence, sexual assault, health and counselling, victim support services, financial and legal support. Nasifah has worked closely with her caseworker since she arrived in Melbourne 12 years ago. She had since established an Afghan Australian Women’s Association to provide Afghan women with advice on personal and domestic affairs; therefore, Nasifah respected the significance of my research. She seemed to understand that the women’s stories were obscured from public view. By being cooperative and sharing her oral/history, Nasifah created a transformational shift, providing a safe space for a younger generation of Afghan women to participate in the workshops and to tell their stories. In the end, Nasifah, Reha, and Maryam agreed to be interviewed.

Although I do not speak Farsi, Dari, or Pashto, I understand that language is a means of communicating ideas, and feelings by using signs, sounds and gestures; but there are also other ways of understanding stories that convey complex messages and knowledge. I was aware of the complications of using academic English words therefore more simple words were vital to convey the research questions and clarify the women’s narratives. I understood the risks of not engaging with interpreters; I also understood the risks of engaging with interpreters because I have been exposed to interpreters who are not necessarily good translators and prone to interpreting information from their own perspective. Considering these factors, in my research, I relied on the fact that each of the Afghan women spoke conversational English.

**Recruitment, phase 2**

The next recruiting process occurred in the western suburbs of Sydney in New South Wales, where there is a large Afghan community. I exchanged courtesies with a Sydney Migrant Research Centre’s
caseworker and arranged a meeting. The meeting with the caseworker lasted for over two and a half hours. She was very interested to know that I had just come back from a private visit to Kabul, the city where she had lived and where her children were born. She was relaxed and happy to speak with me. She provided her story in a casual conversation. I was anxious to have her read the information sheet and sign a consent form so that I could record her narration. The next week the caseworker created a new copy of the flyer, one side in English and one side in Persian, to send out to the Afghan community. She also arranged another meeting with me to sign her consent form and record her interview.

The Sydney cohort included a Hazara woman. The Hazara are also a Persian-speaking people who mainly live in central Afghanistan: Hazara towns are in Balochistan, Pakistan, and Karachi. Hazaras are overwhelmingly Shia Muslims and make up the third-largest ethnic group in Afghanistan; they suffer discrimination based on tribal ethnicity in Afghanistan. There are many Hazara people, legal and illegal refugees, in Iran who identify with Iranians who speak Farsi and are Shia Muslims. The Pashtun people are the most prominent in numbers in Australia while the Hazara people have been the most persecuted refugees to arrive in Australia. The complexities of a dual culture, of being both a Hazara and an Afghan woman are evident in Noor Ali’s narrative, in Chapter Seven.

The inflexible subordination suffered by many Afghan women became more apparent to me when I approached an Afghan colleague about interviewing her friends and relatives for my university research. She believed it would be problematic because Afghan women don’t like their lives or stories represented in a public domain and she stressed that they would have to get permission from their husbands. In the intervening time, extra information packs were sent to several other Migrant Resource Centres and other government bodies that dealt with immigration and refugee settlement. My inquiries resulted in meeting with a local girl’s high school to explain my project with the intention of recruiting Afghan students and their mothers. The outcome was an invitation to a local Ramadan evening with promises of interviews, but nothing further eventuated.
Data collection

Casual Conversations

In research, the researcher often uses their own “version of shorthand which also incorporates interpretation. In researchers’ interview notes, it is quite common to find commentaries about the discussion offered by the informant” (Minichiello, Aroni, Neville and Alexandra 1995, p. 85). As an illustration, in the early recruitment stage of my research project, I mentioned how I admired the vibrant Afghan tradition of textile and carpet weaving to an Afghan caseworker at a Migrant Resource Centre. She, in turn, reminisced about childhood memories in her family’s village. In a casual conversation across the office counter, she told the story of a hand-tufted woven carpet sack she remembers her mother had made and her father used for transporting maize and wheat. This insightful conversation prompted an unexpected view and interpretation that generated a more holistic view of the woman’s life. I recalled a tourist snapshot I had from my first visit to Afghanistan, of a donkey grazing contently (Fig. 27). The donkey wore an old and worn hand-tufted saddle sack. This casual conversation provided an insight into Afghan village life that was not previously visible to me as a researcher.

Story-telling is a feature of many non-recorded interviews and casual conversations. For example, Noor Ali told me how, after a random bomb attack, an old woman was stumbling panic-stricken. She went to comfort her and saw the old woman was clutching an empty baby blanket. She told me this as I was recruiting Afghan women and when I had no access to audio recording devices. My only option was to take notes and listen utilizing my own form of shorthand.

In due course, two of the participating women’s narratives were unrecorded and six participants’ interviews were audio-recorded. The first of these unrecorded casual conversations occurred because the participant had been in an estranged marriage and was distressed. I was concerned for her emotional state so we agreed not to use the audio-recorder and had an everyday face-to-face conversation. The other unrecorded story was largely because of the complexities of the participant’s story involving mujahedeen and Taliban cruelty. I employed multiple strategies, some unrecorded comments, and some snippets of group conversations that were audio-recorded to solicit an informative description of the informant’s life experience. As such, Nasifah and Maha’s stories demonstrate the separation between the ‘public’ and the ‘private’ spheres of life for Afghan/Australian women as they transition between cultures.

The interviewing process
Unstructured interviews have the potential to provide a complex interpretation of the residue of war, as experienced by Afghan women living in Australia. Managed competently, this method draws out the participants’ oral history that in turn identifies broader analytical categories. The focus of this method was to collect information from Afghan women living in Australia, that is, knowledge from a vulnerable immigrant population obtained in a way that was empowering, not exploitive. Fetterman (1989) believes that by being sensitive to the natural flow of conversation, questions typically emerge forming a mix of conversation and embedded questions. I wanted to find out the circumstances that had forced the women to leave their home and families behind. I noticed that if I used a more informal approach the women responded: the women’s dialogue also became informal and was peppered with casual ethnographic observations of re-locating to Australia and the challenges they faced leaving their homes and families.
Interviews

My approach involved using a broad topic of interest to guide the interview. Minichiello, Aroni, Neville and Alexandra (1995) suggest that this type of questioning and discussion assists in greater flexibility than other, more structured interviews. The most important aspect of unstructured interviews is that they take the form of an everyday conversation. However, it must be a controlled environment to keep the participants relating their experiences in relation to the research, and to obtain a more valid explication of the participant’s perceptions of reality. I was interested in the women’s experiences of the residue of conflict and how they were directly affected, and the impact that experience had on them living in Australia. I was aware of the gender segregation and inequality that women suffered disproportionally during the war when existing inequalities were magnified under the mujahedeen and Taliban regimes. I was also aware of the women’s vulnerability as Muslim women in Australia. Therefore, in the vein of empirical research, I engaged with elements of the ‘story telling method’ (Minichiello, Aroni, Neville and Alexandra 1995, p. 85) and unstructured interviews to dispense with formal interviews that might seem like a form of interrogation.

I devised a series of sub-questions, open-ended questions that were presented in such a way that the participating women could be expressive, and share personal information and feelings; questions that I thought might direct the conversations toward my research interests. The purpose of these questions was to make the women comfortable and elicit further conversation. This allowed the participants to make their own choice of what story they would like to convey. These sub-questions were:

- Can you tell me about your wedding?
- When did you come to Australia?
- Tell me what you miss about Afghanistan.
- What skills did you learn as a child in Afghanistan, i.e. embroidery, carpet making, needlework, jewellery, cooking?
At this early stage of research, I was extremely conscious of my ethical responsibilities and the vulnerability of women from war-torn Afghanistan. Beginning the interview with questions of a general nature such as ‘can you tell me about your wedding?’ I considered might initiate good-natured banter.

The First Melbourne Workshop
At our first workshop, there were seven Afghan women. Maryam had collected a bag full of old fabric and clothes as we had agreed in our meet-and-greet conference. I provided the other materials for the workshop; these consisted of knitting and crochet needles of various large sizes, lots of brightly coloured acrylic yarn, plastic bags, and recycled fabric torn and rolled into a ball (Fig. 2), some beads and coloured threads, and snippets of ribbon. To demonstrate the knitting and crochet methods using odds and ends, I had a sample tote bag knitted on big needles and decorated with white flowers crocheted from recycled supermarket plastic bags. I laid everything out over three tables placed in a U-shape, and the women sat on the outside of the table facing in to Nasifah and me. The first hour was hectic as the women investigated the bits and pieces arranged over the trestle tables. Some of the women wanted to knit, some wanted to crochet.
I had in mind to use the bag of old fabric to make decorated squares like in patchwork quilts. I had heard stories about Afghan women in the refugee camps of Pakistan collecting old clothes, cutting the fabric into squares and sewing them together to make blankets (Fig. 29).
The women in refugee camps, forced to flee from Afghanistan without household belongings, also rummaged through charity collections for woollen garments to unravel and re-knit into clothing and rugs. I shared this story with the participants. Even so, a few women were not inclined to participate in the workshop activities. Luckily, I had included a fabric square and a fabric flower in my work case. “Use bits and pieces to make a fabric picture” were my instructions. The women were bemused with both my instructions and with the size of the knitting and crochet needles.

Traditional Afghan needlework is so fine, each thread is counted to form exquisite needlework patterns (Fig. 30), and the contemporary notion of scale that I was suggesting was very awkward for the Afghan women to manage. As trust and rapport developed within the enabling art-based workshops, the informants responded by narrating or recording their stories in their own words, (oral histories) of being banished, widowed, or surviving random bombing. The first recorded interview was with Reha.

The first audio-recorded interview
Reha was eager to be interviewed; we decided to set up the audio-recorder in the adjoining room because the women and children in the workshop were very animated. Beforehand, I had devised

14 Traditional Afghan needlework is exquisite; each thread is counted to replicate age-old patterns. To achieve this the women, use fabric that has a soft natural fibre, such as cotton or rayon.
several simple sub-questions to make participants feel comfortable prior to making inquiries about their experiences. My first question was “Can you tell me about your wedding in Afghanistan?” Reha answered the question in a few words and looked at me as if to say I have more exciting things to tell you and burst into her story. Her story, as she refers to her oral history, went on for nearly 45 minutes. I had to hold back tears as she explained details of her leaving Afghanistan and the uncertain interim before her young family’s traumatic ocean voyage. As we finished the interview, Reha promised that the next interview after Christmas would make me cry even more.

After the participants, had left the workshop and in accordance with the rules of the venue, Nasifah and I picked up all the silver sequins embedded in the carpet. I asked Nasifah if she was happy to be interviewed, she nodded yes and we set up the audiotape accordingly. Nasifah seemed uncomfortable so we spoke for a short while and then she promised to bring me a copy of the Melbourne newspaper that featured her oral/history. She answered my questions in one or two words without much enthusiasm. We concluded the interview and she asked if she could drive me to the station. I found this amusing because in Afghanistan women rarely drive. She laughed and reminded me that “in Afghanistan I drove a car, a motorbike and a truck, my brothers taught me to drive”.

The Second Melbourne Workshop

After Christmas and the summer school holidays, nine women attended the second workshop. Two of them had very limited English skills; still they joined in the art activities. The younger women were quite content to sit and chat in their own language, singing out if they needed anything like cotton or scissors. It all got a bit hectic and the women very easily drifted back into speaking Farsi, yet I did not feel the need to insist on English because the social aspects of the workshop were clearly what appealed to the Afghan women.

Reha had started to make a fabric scarecrow and the ladies now comprehended to some extent the context of contemporary art. Mrs Sidiqi (pseudonym), a retired school teacher, declined to be interviewed but participated in the workshop. She cut out the words happiness, freedom and peace in green, the colour of Islam (Fig. 31). Two of the visiting ladies used their crocheting skills to make
flowers for our scarecrow’s garden. Despite using a crochet hook that was as big as a twig and thread that felt like string, the ladies’ traditional needlework skills were still apparent. Each crochet chain was executed with perfection and continuous tension (Figs 32 and 33). After the first hour Reha was ready to complete her interview in an adjoining room.

Figure 31. Cut-out fabric Happiness, freedom and peace in Persian. Digital image: Annette Tzavaras

Figure 32. Hand-crocheted flower by Afghan woman. Victoria workshop 2012. Digital image: Annette Tzavaras
Reha finished her second interview and, just as she had promised, she and I shed tears. She had nothing but praise for the Australian authorities she encountered coming from Afghanistan as an ‘illegal immigrant’ by boat (see Chapter Seven). We both wiped away tears, and at the end of the interview we sat silently for a few seconds until we regained our composure. I thanked Reha for sharing her story with me, she smiled, said goodbye, and hurried out to join her friends.

On another occasion, a cold winter’s day in Victoria, there were six women attending the workshop so Nasifah decided to cook an Afghan lunch. She chopped up small potatoes and shallow-fried them, then she added chopped spring onions, tomatoes, and capsicum. When they were caramelised, she added four eggs and lastly, chopped coriander. As she busied herself with lunch, she spoke at length with the caseworker about her concerns for the aging population of the Afghan diaspora in Australia. She went on to acquaint me with how some older Afghan women were virtual prisoners
in their homes and how she had to wait for the men to go to out before she could offer any assistance, which was sometimes simply the moral support and the company of another woman.

**Recruitment grinds to a halt**

I had no contact with the Afghan women’s group in Victoria for the next three months and recruitment seemed to be at a standstill. Even though the information sheets for the research project were initially received with enthusiastic endorsement from the Migrant Research Services, suitable Afghan women participants were not coming forward. Without contact I could only imagine that the centre’s caseworker was busy with a hectic schedule and therefore not able to arrange a time with the Afghan women. Recruitment in New South Wales was also difficult. The inner-city government office that had seemed so keen about my project and research had produced just one interview, a Hazara woman employed by the agency. In the down time, I decided to email the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), a worldwide organisation; its website has a comprehensive number of Afghan women profiled with individual storylines.

I recalled seeing an exhibition of textile art at Monash University in Melbourne, where local artist Gail Weiss sent art work to Afghanistan through the Support Association for the Women of Afghanistan (SAWA). I sent an email with details of my research to the RAWA and the Australian body (SAWA). I received an answer to advise me about a project that involved Hazara Afghan women and a line of Afghan-inspired clothing. A phone conversation with the Sydney caseworker revealed that Hazara women had been invited to participate in a refugee program to apply needlework and beading to designer garments for a young Sydney fashion designer several years before. My research located the fashion designer website and sadly the Afghan ladies and their skills in this area were barely mentioned.

Lindenberg, Solorzana, Vilaro, and Westbrook (2001) state “gaining access to potentially hard to reach populations is a great challenge. Some groups are not only hard to reach geographically but may also be culturally, socially, or developmentally resistant to participation” (p. 135). This was my experience, accessing the lives of Afghan women in Australia was difficult because of the traditional
tribal patriarchal practices embedded in the Islamic values of Afghan society. This was enforced dramatically in Afghanistan by the mujahedeen and Taliban regimes when women were virtual prisoners in their own homes. In Australia, the Afghan family maintains the same cultural sense of family privacy where the woman is encouraged not to participate in public activities.

**Picking up from where things left off**

After months of worrying that I may not get enough Afghan women to participate in my arts-based project, I found a Western Sydney government agency that decided to present my program again to Afghan women. The generalist caseworker believed she could possibly gain some funding by promoting the recycled aspect of the project. That same week the Victorian caseworker confirmed the next workshop. I was feeling nervous because I was not sure if the Victorian women had enjoyed participating in workshops, or if crocheting big colourful flowers was something that the women identified with.

At the same time, I concluded my interview with the Hazara woman from Sydney. Her interview was extremely informative; she spoke across generations, about her own marriage and polygamy within her own family yet she was uncomfortable discussing issues of arranged or forced marriage. It was difficult to remain unaffected and to stay emotionally detached. Her story touched, moved, and inspired me emotionally and intellectually. After analysing her story, it seemed that she was motivated because she wanted to bring to light the myriad cultural overlays of classic patriarchal domination, gender inequality, and religious fundamentalism she had experienced as a Hazara woman. Hazara women in Afghanistan have been subjugated by intersecting and compounding ethical issues imposed on them for decades, thwarting the development of women of her generation. Her story is presented in Chapter Seven

**The Sydney Workshops**

The Sydney cohort were an older group of women, who were educated in Afghanistan and left at the time of the Russian conflict. Some of them spoke English very well and others were shy about their English literacy. By the time the Sydney cohort could participate in the research workshops,
my experiences with the Victorian cohort had built my confidence and the Sydney workshops and interviews were more orderly and productive. The women were interested in learning to crochet and it became clear to me that Afghan women preferred the social aspects of the workshops. Therefore, I tentatively suggested to the Sydney group that we might conduct crocheting and knitting activities (Fig 34) for one hour and the second hour would be to record the women’s oral history in the form of casual conversations. This would allow them to assist each other. The women agreed to these arrangements. I placed the audio-recorder on the table near the end so it was not obvious. Parwin’s oral history was in the form of a recorded casual conversation. In a following workshop Sara was anxious to tell her story but her anxiety affected her English and her friend at times interpreted for her. This was also a recorded conversation.

![Freeform crocheted wall hanging by Afghan women at Sydney workshop. Digital image: Annette Tzavaras](image)

There were four Sydney Afghan women who agreed to participate in the workshops and interviews, two of whom were distantly related, and the other two lived close to each other and were friends.
Noor Ali and Maha had declined to participate in the workshops but signed a consent form to be interviewed separately.

Ever so casually, one of the women, Parwin, reminisced about her father making decorative vests that were popular with Pashtu men. He would make them by hand, she recalled, his precise needlework skills extending to crocheting and knitting for ornamental purposes (Fig. 35). Her eyes welled up as she spoke of her father who was still living in Afghanistan. He was in his 90s and she expressed her fear of never seeing him again.

![Figure 35. A typical Pashtun embroidered waistcoat. Attribution Pashtun Culture and History](http://pashtuncultureandhistory.blogspot.com.au/2010/07/pashtun-embroidery.html)

As agreed, after a casual lunch we closed the door, and initially the conversations hedged around the primary purpose of the research project. Mindful of the audio-recorder, the women gradually responded in open and casual conversations. Clearly, they felt more secure as they encouraged each other. The women shared simple conversations that shifted the focus to the injustice and discrimination they faced in terms of violence, gender, and ethnicity under the pro-Russian government. The ‘fieldwork’ or workshops that started out as formal and shy gatherings transformed into a relaxed social conversational get-together generating valuable data.

One of the non-conversant women who spent time in the Sydney workshop picked up on the casual conversations about women’s inequality and added to the conversation in Farsi. I was shocked when
another participant of the group translated in English on her behalf and told me, “she said, when there is a knock at the door and I am alone I yell out, there is nobody home.” This exemplifies the entrenched patriarchal influence over women such that they see themselves as a non-person, a nobody. The reality of male dominance, compounded by decades of conflict, was not visible to me until the women’s stories exposed their vulnerability towards patriarchal authority and, as to be expected, it was more perceptible with illiterate women who had to rely solely on male authority and say so. The workshops were then suspended for six weeks because Ramadan was approaching.

Ramadan followed shortly after the Christmas school holidays, and this meant that I had a long spell in between interviews with the Victorian women. I had already ruled out photography as a method because I had come to understand that it would not be a welcome approach by Afghan women, but I did photograph their freeform work in the workshops. I documented their work and made a small album for them as a keepsake. Finally, when we proceeded with the workshops again, the women were jovial and forthright in their casual conversations with the audio-recorder. Each week there were different numbers who attended the workshop; some of the mothers had school activities and there were doctor’s appointments and other matters to be concerned with.

One day I was quietly photographing some of the work the women were involved with on my mobile phone. In response, the women showed me digital phone images of their children. I asked if I could use my mobile phone to photograph them with their work for my research project. Mrs Sidiqi came in late that day and protested loudly that she was not included, so we took more photographs (Fig. 36). This humorous encounter, ironically caricatures the stereotypical ways one understands the other and as Carland (2017) suggests solidifies, “the belief that each side is both the victim of wilful misunderstanding and the possessor of fair appraisal and nuance” (p. 28). After the women’s laughter waned, the caseworker left, and the women continued with casual conversations about their experience of war in Afghanistan.
Analysis, visualisation and conceptualisation

My research question conveys my concerns in understanding the ongoing effects of political and cultural warfare on women in Afghanistan. I queried how the images of the Afghan woman in the burqa were selected and edited. I pondered how an image on television represents the actual situation in Afghanistan. The oral histories of participating Afghan women paint an-other picture that disputes the dominate representation of the Muslim Other, as portrayed in the following chapters.

Data analysis

Working closely with the Afghan women overlaps between theory and methodology. Patriarchal practices were brought into sharp focus in the oral histories of the Afghan women. Their stories wove together different discourses and experiences and distinguish the strict mode of classic patriarchal practices (Kandiyoti, 1988) that operate trans-culturally and trans-nationally.

After ensuring the integrity of the recruiting, workshops and interview processes I turned to the theory of intersectionality to excavate the multiple layers of gender, race, and class issues that often marginalise the voice of disenfranchised immigrant Afghan women. I thought I was prepared to deal with the women’s stories, but I had not considered how positioning practices are culturally embedded. Increasingly I became aware that my existing views reflected contemporary Western
ethnocentric bias (Tan & Moghaddam, 1995; Razack, 2007). To recognise the filters and frames that impacted my research while transcribing the audio-recorded interviews was a challenging task; I had to listen carefully; first, because of the women’s limited English and second, to fully engage with their stories. Maintaining integrity to the women’s oral history took precedent as some of the participants’ commentary might be politically sensitive to the family still in Afghanistan. It was also imperative that my focus was on the content relevant to the research questions.

Field notes
Experienced researchers can glean information from their notes that is impossible to observe in the recorded interviews. In the situation of participant observation, a combination of asking, listening, and looking can assess the importance of what is being said. It is well recognised that field notes contain more than a transcription of what the audio-recorder has registered (Minichiello, Aroni, Neville and Alexandra 1995, p. 215). As an observer, the participants’ physical presence and attitude, emotional state, and enthusiasm or indifference contribute to data collection. My field notes as a rule were written up no later than the day after the interview. As well as that, time in transit, either public transport or private vehicle, allowed time for me to reflect on what had been said (or not said) and make further observations as to what was relevant at the time.

At the end of each of the workshops, I had obtained valuable stories that needed to be transcribed and analysed. There was an hour’s train ride home where I had the time to reflect on the workshop and the conversations. I made some notes and bullet points to stimulate my memory and the following day documented my activities and casual conversations onto a Word document. One significant observation was how Reha, when telling her story, became emotionally involved, and her demeanour, her outward behaviour shifted: it was like she was in the boat drifting on the Indian Ocean and then she changed tack to maintain her smiling disposition and continued her story of being saved by Australian Customs officials.

As I analysed the process of collecting data, I realised a feature of qualitative research was the close interaction which meant that collection, observation and initial analysis were often simultaneous.
This also depended on the extent of the women’s oral fluency, which meant narrative data and analysis might fluctuate. Each workshop, interview, and observation had a narrative aspect to sort through and reflect on so I could add the fine detail to bring them to life to the reader. As Maha’s interview was unrecorded, I listened to her story and that afternoon I scripted her account of marriage and entered it on the computer under my ‘Participants’ file. Once I had completed the fieldwork/workshops and had recorded eight interviews, it was time to turn my mind to transcribing the audio-recorded interviews.

The analysis of qualitative data involves interpreting the study findings. However, in quantitative data analysis some social scientists dispute the existence of a definitive, objective view of knowledge and social reality (Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Knowles & Coles, 2008). Consequently, different researchers may well interpret the same data differently. This leads to the issue of the verifiability of qualitative data analysis. The following table explicitly identifies the interconnected processes of data collection, data interpretation and analysis.

**Table 3. Depicting the data collection and analysis processes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Salient Themes</th>
<th>Explicate/Elaboration</th>
<th>Quotes/visual image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What were the residual effects of cultural and political conflict experienced by Afghan women that forced them to leave their home and family?</td>
<td>Loss and grief</td>
<td>Conflict with Soviet Russia and the mujahedeen and the Taliban contributed to the mass exodus of millions of traditional Muslim Afghan refugees.</td>
<td>“I lost 35 people to my family in the war. My younger brother and my husband and also two brothers to my husband, they killed by (Russian) rockets and my brother killed by mujahedeen Taliban”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What made you leave Afghanistan?</td>
<td>The communist orientation of ‘Soviet Russia’</td>
<td>The mujahedeen and Taliban limited women’s interaction, and socialisation</td>
<td>“two or three times my neighbours my friends they told me, “Taliban know here is it private”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
within the Afghan government  
within the inflexible patriarchal extended family.  
school you have to stop for a while”. Two, three times I stopped for a while because Taliban come around to my house ... It was very dangerous.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What difficulties do Afghan women experience in Australia?</th>
<th>Discrimination and racism directed towards Australian Muslim populations</th>
<th>When we see a visual image of an Afghan woman in a burqa we do not see her sense of pain and grief, or her sense of loss and mourning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What historical observations (East/West) did Australians draw from the heightened visibility of veiled women after 11th September 2001?</td>
<td>Research has acknowledged the threads that connect Orientalism, Neo-Orientalism and Islamophobia in post-colonial studies</td>
<td>Afghan women have been presented as the face of terror or as being a threat to Australian national security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Quite frankly, I don’t want in this country people who are prepared, if those reports are true, to throw their own children overboard. And that kind of emotional blackmail is very distressing ... I don’t want those type of people here”’ John Howard, Prime Minister (Sparrow, 2005, p. 64).</td>
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Reading the data to answer the research question

What is the reality behind the visual representation of the veiled Afghan woman in the blue burqa, and how do Afghan women recount their experience of cultural and political warfare now that they reside in Australia? Richardson (1994) argues that reading and writing the research is a method of discovery, “poststructuralism links language, subjectivity, social organisation and power” (p. 518). She claims that “language, does not ‘reflect’ social reality, but produces meaning, creates social reality” (p. 518). She also suggests that “different languages and different discourses within a given language divide up
the world and give it meaning in ways that are not reducible to one another” (p. 518). In other words, we need to acknowledge that subjectivity and personal accounts of experience are historically and locally specific; this methodology is concerned with giving an account of the knowledge and experience of Afghan women positioned as Humanitarian Immigrants and refugees in Australia.

Richardson (1997) also invites scholars to apply sociological imagination to the writing process and to define and communicate knowledge in ways that go beyond traditional scholarship. Clearly, I am present in the text and bring my experience and sociological imagination into the context of this research. Richardson describes this strategy as “the sociological rest in the intersection between the biographical and the historical” (1997, p. 1). As an example, when the Afghan women were looking for descriptors or were challenged by emotions or faltering English, as the researcher I suggested metaphor or analogies to help them try to express themselves. When Reha was trying to describe the size of the cabin of the smugglers’ boat and how she had to bend her body to fit under the cabin, the analogy “like a baby” was enough for her to know I had understood she was indicating a foetal position. I was also able to shift my position to one of empathy or humour, I could accommodate the interviews or conversations to aid the women in telling their stories in the English language. Co-crafting data in such a way is a means of getting closer to our topic and our relationship to the individual voices, as well as to the significance of the topic (Richardson 1997).

Richardson’s (1990) methods of writing seem to be a natural fit with Crenshaw’s theory of intersectionality and its focus on multiple historically oppressed populations. The experiences of all Afghan women are too different to be summarised in a single point of view. Yet when we talk about them—oppressed women, veiled women, and Muslim women, arranged marriages, gendered inequality—we tend to focus on these issues one at a time as if they were separate from each other. Richardson (1990) claims that “writing collective stories enlists our sociological imagination, as we convert private problems into public issues, thereby making collective identity, and collective solutions possible” (p. 28). This is one way of giving a voice to women whose oral histories have been omitted from the public domain.
Casual conversations, observations from my private trips to Afghanistan, the workshops and field notes allowed for imaginations to sustain and construct the women’s stories from the data with attention paid to the important themes of patriarchy, gender and ethnicity. In such ways, intersectionality allowed a systemic rewriting and analysis of the Afghan women’s oral histories. When analysing and writing women’s oral history, a struggle for the researcher is to clarify multiple and contradictory sociological knowledge and experience, as each discourse contests for a position of influence. “Feminist poststructuralist theory holds that no theory has a hold on the truth ... no writing is innocent. Power, language, subjectivity is intertwined: the self is fluid: and knowledge is local, partial and contextual” (Richardson, 1997, p. 2). Therefore, the theory of intersectionality focuses on the wider issues in the women’s stories - the complex intersections of patriarchy, gender, and ethics that overlap in the experience of Afghan women as they transit from war to peace, as immigrants and refugees in Australia.

Methodologically, how I write about the research can influence how others come to understand Afghan Muslim women in Australia. Social scientists, according to Richardson (1997) and St.Pierre (1999), do not only tell a story about what they have found, they actively craft a particular view of reality. I understand that I am part of the research process and that my approach to the research is fundamentally influenced by how I see myself in relation to the social world. My inner circle is shaped by social forces influenced by family and cultural diversity: this research helps me to understand aspects of everyday life that I take for granted. Therefore, it is essential for you, the reader to comprehend the foundation and validity of knowledge of the researcher in the co-crafting of the Afghan women’s oral history. Combined with the theoretical concept of intersectionality, I articulate strategies that are useful in addressing discriminatory practices imposed on Afghan women in Australia as Muslim refugees and immigrants. To paraphrase Knapp (2005), the more specific factors that have fuelled the dynamics of the discourse on difference and disparity among women have yet to be looked at through distinct intersections that confront women from patriarchal societies, such as those practiced in Afghanistan (p. 249).
Transcription of interviews

I transcribed each conversation. This was a time-consuming task but by so doing I had the advantage of keeping intact the participant’s words and I found, as the researcher, I was more aware of the emerging themes. To represent the talk in written form, I chose to transcribe the conversations in a way faithful to the telling of the story. It was a priority for me to use the women’s voices verbatim whenever possible. I then entered the transcribed data on the computer to identify and highlight key points and themes in a summarised form. In turn, this opened the possibility of analysing the recorded field notes and the women’s oral history to turn those into stories linked to field notes, to relate the reading of the data to answer the research question.

In all, there were six audio-recorded interviews and two un-recorded interviews, eight in all to codify, determine key themes, and develop propositions and report key findings. A central aspect of data analysis is conceptualising data into theory. To do this it is necessary to elicit “both the evidence and the clues from which knowledge and understanding can emerge” (Minichiello, Aroni, Neville and Alexandra, 1995, p. 248). I analysed the data looking for key themes, reading between the lines, listening critically for what was said and what was not said to help define the women’s experiences.

I used the computer program NVivo to help the data analysis process. NVivo is a qualitative computer software program that allows researchers to customise and code raw data. By using NVivo with a small exploratory study, the qualitative software package assisted in identifying themes. Engaging with these themes in the data collection assisted in the results being communicated clearly and concisely to comprehend the complex circumstances that Afghan women find themselves in. Reservations concerning the use of NVivo became apparent, such an elaborate coding system is more appropriate for a rigorous analysis of a large amount of data. With only a small sample, the main disadvantage with the computer program was the time required to make full use of NVivo’s
tools to master the data analysis process. I recalled Ros Hurworth\textsuperscript{15}, a facilitator at a Monash University Conference suggesting, she found a more hands-on approach for learning how to do data analysis helpful because she could visually analyse simultaneously. Therefore, I used a combination of manual and computer methods to arrive at the key themes set out below, originating from the women’s oral histories to answer the research question.

**Key Themes**

- Classic patriarchy in Afghanistan
- Fractured family associations because of social and international political conflict
- Survival amidst the violence and trauma of war
- Loss and grief, health and wellbeing
- Generational issues (older parents left behind) in refugee camps or detention

**Conclusion**

This chapter has described the underpinning research methodology and the methods I employed to collect and analyse the oral histories of Afghan women living in Australia. I have articulated the research design and how the procedures engaged in this study brought to light some of the complex ethical concerns of refugee and immigrant women who have experienced strict classic patriarchal practices.

Systematically in this chapter, I have described the essential considerations required to carry out ethical research. I have narrated the stop–start elements of recruitment, and the natural concerns of Afghan women and their anxious relationship to research. One example is the significance of genealogy, of family ancestry that can easily be traced in Afghanistan. As one participant described, grandparents and parents who help younger family members financially to escape Afghanistan can be threatened and intimidated by the Taliban. This is another deterrent for Afghan women to participate in research programs.

\textsuperscript{15} A/Prof Ros Hurworth facilitated the ACSPRI 2011 Spring Program in Social Research Methods and Research Technology at Monash University September 2011.
I secured two distinct participant groups, the Melbourne cohort and the Sydney cohort. I articulated my experience as researcher and described the experience of the workshop process with a diverse range of Afghan women. The participant observation research technique, where the researcher is both an outsider and insider, was an effective method in gaining social acceptance by Afghan women to achieve an inclusive understanding of Afghan women’s internal structure of their patriarchal Muslim culture.

After interviewing the Afghan participants, I was faced with the ethical issue of who owns the interview data and how to make the data speak while in search of a way to preserve the rights and integrity of the women’s oral histories, their spoken words. Accordingly, I used some aspects of narrative ethnography to present their oral/histories as short stories that incorporate the researcher’s experience. This brings into play firsthand experience of the damage wreaked on the social and cultural fabric of Afghanistan and her peoples. It is easy to see, as the narratives unfolded, that there was an intertwining of voice, the researched voice and the researcher’s voice, which brings to light the different perspectives and discourse arising from the embodied experience of warfare. Human experience is cross-cultural even within a culture, each person’s belief of reality, however real, is only one piece of that reality, and as such, is imperfect by another person. Nonetheless, it is the conversation and the spoken words, the oral histories and interviews that bring to attention the women’s individual experience and interactions in fleeing Afghanistan and coming to Australia.

The next three chapters (re)present the participants’ narratives of experience, supplemented by my field notes. Each brings into focus stories about injustice and defines collective stories as those that connect an individual story to the broader story of a marginalised group (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). To achieve this I use Crenshaw’s (1991) theory of intersectionality in a disciplined analysis to inform and rewrite the women’s oral histories to challenge and extend the dominant view of the Muslim woman as Other in Australian society and to bring to life; *The reality behind the visual representation of the veiled Afghan woman in the blue burqa, and how do Afghan women recount their experience of cultural and political warfare now that they reside in Australia?*
Chapter Six: Ordinary day-to-day conversations in unrecorded interviews
Chapter Six: Ordinary day-to-day conversations in unrecorded interviews

Each woman’s story underlines key concepts of masculinity in war-torn Afghanistan, as well as providing a glimpse of the social and cultural contexts and practices that define the role of women. The eight narratives also play a key role in demonstrating the entrenched and strict classic patriarchal practices in Afghan society. Having faced conflict and disaster, physically and emotionally, the women literally and metaphorically unveiled their repressed memories during the interviewing process. Their storylines gradually uncover all the superimposed layers of loss and fear previously embalmed in the sentiment of forgetting. They offer a few fragments of their former turmoil, yet each narrative advances an exploratory analysis and broadens theory for further interpretation. In this way the layers of awareness are deepened by the stories of their experiences as women of refugee status in Australia; their stories bring together simultaneously the political, rhetorical and literary construct of the Muslim Other.

The stories of Maryam, Maha and Noor Ali depict the complexities of survival in a country at war and the stories of Sara and Nasifa illustrate how Afghan women have been used in Afghanistan as a tool of war. And the stories of Parwin, Nargeba and Reha, who were fleeing Taliban persecution, convey how pervasive international occupation in Afghanistan and prejudiced outsider interpretations have demonised veiled Afghan women. I listened while the women told about witnessing hand-to-hand combat; and how they protected their children from death and destruction during the cold war conflict by sending them to remote villages where family elders might care for them. Parents of teenage children were concerned that their teenage children (boys and girls) might be raped so sought refuge as asylum seekers. I was shocked as one woman told me that she thought her children had been blown up in a random bomb attack, only to find them in another province three weeks later. I was outraged when a mother told how she had to save her food and water rations for her two small children when she and her husband escaped from the Taliban and were languishing in an unseaworthy boat for days in the Indian Ocean.
Introduction

In 1978, Russia and Afghanistan established the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, even though many Afghan people at the time were apprehensive of the new communist government. A year later in 1979, the mujahedeen insurgency began to revolt as it became evident that many of the new laws worked against their Muslim faith. The uncertainty at that time served Western hegemony objectives to justify war under the pretence of human rights to gain a political and strategic position in the Middle East. The tribal-cultural differences in Afghanistan were characterised by intentional violence between the warring Russians, mujahedeen and Taliban, as well as between the Pashtuns, Sunni Muslims, and the Hazara, Shia Muslims (Sparrow, 2005, p. 30). Under the mujahedeen and Taliban, the war in Afghanistan was particularly misogynous, a thinly disguised prejudice against women, where demanding and punishing practices were taken up by the Taliban. Edwards (2002), claims the conflict in Afghanistan is a legacy that began with a social experiment of Afghan leader Amanullah (1892–1960) in the 1920s and; 70 years later it culminated “in the advent of the Taliban regime” (p. 21). Edwards believes that the Taliban were intentional on returning Afghanistan to an “illusory state of original grace in opposition to the sins of Western society” (p.21). Afghanistan civil society was disrupted and after years of fighting it was in tatters, and people lived outside their traditional socio-cultural origins because of such uncertainty. Many ordinary Afghans forsook their country of birth and sought refuge elsewhere. Unbidden or not, the international gaze on Afghanistan was intensified through the popular media, giving the West the opinion that “since all we ever hear about is violence, this must just be the way Afghans really are, the way they have always been, and the way they will continue to be” (Edwards, 2002, p. 18).

Interlude

Before I actuate the oral histories of the eight Afghan women, I propose a breathing space, this is in preparation for the poignant stories of women caught up in the tragedy of a brutalised country. Women, in whose language (Farsi) there is no word for feminism and who were denied the most basic freedoms.
It is also essential that I acknowledge and emphasise that as a non-Afghan and non-Muslim researcher I am treading a very fine line in navigating the analysis of the Afghan women’s interviews. I fully appreciate the tensions and constraints of crossing cultural boundaries and fully aware of the precariousness of my position in underlining how Afghan patriarchy practices linger in Australia.

It would be a serious omission however if my research failed to explore the exposed palimpsest layers beneath the surface, issues of gender inequality, patriarchal and male moral authority that constrain the lives of Afghan women living in Australia. Research needs to be heard, and data comprehensively reported.

The next three chapters communicate the women’s stories; they represent their experiences of their transition from the war in Afghanistan to ‘women at risk’ refugees living in Australia. The women’s stories demonstrate the varied and complex situations they left behind and how their individual experiences have created a social anxiety that is imprinted on their memory and complicates the interface of transitioning into Australian society. Some of the women who were interviewed for this research had been educated and career minded before the Russian invasion. They had to leave so much behind: beautiful houses with servants, family and friends; they could not tell anyone they were leaving Afghanistan; they were unable to sell all their possessions because if the authorities found out they could risk death. All have been given a pseudonym to protect their identity.

The following chapter presents two unstructured and unrecorded interviews. The empirical narratives of Nasifah and Maha address the research question by exploring the residue of war: Nasifah’s firsthand account of hand-to-hand combat in the streets of Kabul in 1992 demonstrates the Russian/Afghan army’s shocking war crimes. Additionally, the narrative of a cross-cultural life and the gender structures that present into an Australian/Afghan extended family demonstrate the power of classic patriarchy practices that keep the Afghan family together for life. This includes all social interaction being expected to be solely and entirely within the extended family. The aim here, as I begin this section, is to tell ‘their’ stories and ‘my’ stories of listening to their stories and then re-telling their stories. Lather & Smithies (1997) describe this process as “giving ‘voice’ to the stories of others” (p. xiii).
Nasifah’s story: A candid first-person account of the Afghan Civil War

This is a candid eye-witness account of the civil war when the mujahedeen were poised to take control of Kabul. Nasifah’s story illustrates the volatility wrought by the vast array of traditional and cultural changes throughout the era of modernisation in Afghanistan followed by the rise of more traditional rulers and civil war. The following events bring into sharp focus the situational vulnerability of Afghan women, sights and sounds they were subjected to that were considered by Western society as too shocking to view until they had to justify their own occupation in Afghanistan.

Preamble

Nasifah, widowed when her husband was claimed by a random bomb as he was waiting in line to secure employment; a mature woman, she now maintains a household of five. She nurses an elderly mother and drives a car. I was surprised about the car but she told me with pride. As a young woman, I drove around Kabul. Nasifah’s oral history was published in a weekly newspaper (Bezhan 2009) and Nasifah herself suggested I should read her story because of her imperfect English. It may have also have been distressing for her to relive the violence she witnessed. Nasifah participated in the workshops and contributed to occasional audio-recorded, unstructured casual conversations. I abided by her suggestions and have used her published text as a secondary-source to supplement her audio-recorded comments.

Struggling with the English language Nasifah has a deep voice and a strong Farsi accent. She is in her mid 50s, her black hair is pulled back loosely and tied in a knot at the back, complementing her Western clothing. She is an advocate for women’s rights and would like to see her work with Afghan women here in Australia sustained in the future. You can read my story, she tells me, it’s in the local paper, and showed me a copy at the following workshop. Nasifah’s audio-recorded casual conversation is verbatim in Montype Corsiva blue font interwoven in black monotype with the secondary published source.
April 1992 Kabul, Afghanistan

Nasifah recalled the first days of civil war in the streets of Kabul; she was caring for her six-month-old daughter, two sons - three and five years old - and her elderly mother. Fighting was raging all round them between the mujahedeen and the Taliban. The real horror for Nasifah was when she found herself sheltering in a butcher’s shop from straying bullets with her mother and her children. The timber door had been slightly ajar and promised respite from the terror outside. As Nasifah surveyed her surroundings in the semi-darkness, she saw broken chairs, an empty suitcase, and a Koran. Mountains of clothes were piled on the floor; she could smell urine from wastepipe drains spilling into the room. Worse still was the stench of rotting flesh: as she quickly looked around, she noticed just a few feet away a large bucket overflowing with blood and body parts. Imagine the shock Nasifah suffered when she looked up to see the bodies of 17 women hanging from large meat hooks speared through their throats, their breasts cut off (Bezhan 2009).

The abrupt and unexpected changes from Russian occupation and then invasion resulted in the loss of Nasifah’s husband, and extended family members. Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, and other tribal groups fought for the sacred laws of Islam, the most commonly practised faith throughout Afghanistan. Nasifah’s father, and most of her brothers and uncles had already been killed in the war between the mujahedeen and the Soviet Union. They had been fighting the left-wing Afghan government that the Soviets supported. Despite her own loss, Nasifah mourned for her elderly mother who had lost her husband and all her sons.

Prior to the turbulent civil war (1979–1989) in Afghanistan, Nasifah had attended Malalai High School, a prestigious girls’ school in Kabul named after the legendary female leader of the Afghan resistance against the British occupation in the nineteenth century. The school, mostly intact, is a light brick colour, and spans a large section of the central business district. The school is a source of pride to Kabul residents who are quick to point out this local landmark. It was here that Nasifah completed school and became an active member of the Women’s Democratic Organization of Afghanistan founded in 1967 (Bezhan, 2009).
Despite what the West thought then, women were doing very well in Afghanistan. They were involved in the political process; (during the modernising period in the 50s and 60s) they were employed in all fields of work ranging from labouring, teaching to medicine and even the military. Prior to that very few Afghan women had a role in the field of literature

Nasifah travelled around the provinces of Afghanistan actively campaigning for women’s rights and social and political reform, and was part of the neighbourhood self-defence groups located across the country and in the major cities of Afghanistan. The army gave women in her position Kalashnikov rifles and provided them with training (Bezhan, 2009). Nasifah explained how her role in ‘women’s rights’ included speaking to Afghan women about the disadvantages for women and children in a multiple-marriage. She trained women in family-planning, post-natal care, and general health. Nasifah’s story resonates with the work of Moghadam (1993, p. 130) who claims that Decree No. 7 of the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) embarked on an aggressive literacy campaign. In fact, the PDPA became openly Marxist, with strong Leninist tendencies. The literacy programs “led by the Women’s Democratic Organization of Afghanistan, whose function was to educate women, bring them out of seclusion, and initiate social programs throughout the countryside ... by August 1979 the government had established 600 new schools” (Moghadam, 1993, p. 130). By the 1990s, the PDPA had largely abandoned Marxism. The Party ruled Afghanistan until 1992, when its last president, Najibullah, resigned. Nasifah and members of her extended family were progressive advocates of education and social reforms for Afghanistan. Nasifah supported the amendments that improved the wellbeing of Afghan women; she advocated abortion, immunisation, and education for girls. She trained women in personal health standards and hygiene, and how to improve food nutrition and security for vulnerable village households.

We fought those who, in the name of Islam, kidnapped, raped, and murdered young women. We learned to protect ourselves, our children, our communities, and our dignity. We fought those who, in the name of Islam, murdered young women and boys ... set fire to schools ... those who wanted to undo all the gains women had made in Afghanistan. The mujahedeen did not believe in women’s rights; their extreme ideology was taken up by their offspring and
successors—the Taliban—under whose savage laws and philosophy women earned the label: ‘the ghosts of Afghanistan’.

In the war time (it was a) very hard life to all of my family. I lost 35 people to my family in the war time, my young brother 21 years of age, my husband, two brothers to my husband, they killed by rockets, my brothers killed by mujahedeen and Taliban.

Women were nothing. They were sold and handled like animals. My best friend, Suraya, was just 12 when she was married off to a 60-year-old man who gave her father some land and a few sheep. Of course, she had no say, Suraya did not even know about her marriage until the day of her wedding. Her husband Rashid already had four other wives living in his house. Nine of his 17 children were older than Suraya. I saw her in the bazaar six months after her marriage, covered in a black burqa from head to toe ... the next year when my parents and I moved to Kabul we heard that Suraya was pregnant.

I still wake in the night thinking of the things done to women that I saw with my own eyes and the stories I hear from other women. That was the day I decided to devote my life to Afghan women, to elevate their status in society. In 1992 or 1993 I travelled by bus to Peshawar. Pakistan too is very ... I lost everything in my country before the war.

After fleeing the disturbance and the shock of lethal physical confrontations, Nasifah spent many years facing uncertain security and an uncertain future; she escaped Afghanistan with her mother and children only to spend seven years in a refugee camp in Pakistan where the Pashtun Taliban also operated and Afghan women refugees still lived in fear of Taliban directives.

The empirical evidence provided by Afghan born Nasifah, offers the reader a first-hand account of the massacre of women. She provides compelling evidence of a time when the Soviet Union had been supporting Afghanistan, its bordering neighbour providing humanitarian aid and, the following turmoil when Russia was in fear of losing its communist proxy and invaded Afghanistan.

Nasifah’s story shows how various layers of conflict were inflicted on many women in Afghanistan by a triad of patriarchal dominance, religious fundamentalism, and gender violence entwined in the ethos of war. Nasifah faced additional barriers, such as language and racism, when she arrived in
Australia as a refugee, still overwhelmed by her experiences of loss, grief, and conflict in Afghanistan. Most Australians have no concept of such grief and experiences of war – of witnessing hand-to-hand combat. To paraphrase the Australian official war artist to Afghanistan, Ben Quilty (Stephens 2016), we are so sceptical about refugees and asylum seekers that we are unable to remember the meaning and feelings behind the words. For the most part, Australian political discourse about Afghanistan lies behind any formal structured debates about Muslim refugees, thereby undermining the experience of women such as Nasifah. Indeed, the impression of Afghan women in Australia in recent years has been centred on a series of stereotypical images of veiled and oppressed women to the extent of frequently ignoring the considerable effects war has had on Afghan women’s rights, well-being, education, and career.

Yet Nasifah’s objective has always been to promote gender equality and trust in education for Afghan women. She credits her own education and the associated ethical obligations, for being a campaigner for the awareness of women’s rights in Afghanistan. For these same reasons, as an Australian citizen, Nasifah continues to support Afghan women who have suffered the loss of home and family; she encourages Afghan women who have been denied an education; and worries about the elderly and the emotional distress they have suffered as refugees; leaving behind their distinct Islamic culture, their nationality, and ethnicity, as well as the social status of their generation. Nasifah has herself experienced how English literacy is debilitating in the first instance for refugees and immigrants, after learning English to a conversational level, she instigated and personally administered a Women and Youth Association in Victoria. As a result of her work within the Afghan community in Australia she has received many awards.

Maha’s story: A radical female Afghan student

Between the Russian occupation, the Soviet-backed People’s Democratic Party Afghanistan (PDPA), in the early 1970s and the Russian invasion of 1979, the intersection of classic patriarchal practices and gender domination is evident in Maha’s story. Maha was born in Kabul; as a young university student she was involved in protesting against the social communist reforms imposed on students by the Soviet Union. Under the dire circumstances that the communist backed
Russian/Afghan government proposed, Maha displayed enormous courage by burning her books, buoyed on by her student cohort. She was aware that some students had been beaten while others had been taken away by soldiers. This occurred while there was an accelerated influx of Soviet troops, and armoured columns fanning the city of Kabul; the Russians had already occupied major institutions, airbases and strategic lines of communication. The elevating seriousness of the situation made Maha’s family realise it was time to leave Kabul. They left everything behind and walked away from the Russian conflict; from village to village they walked, over narrow pathways across the mountains to Pakistan.

Preamble

Maha, in her late forties, wears a hijab that covers her hair, her shoulders, and her chest; she has a married daughter, a teenage son, and a small grandchild. Her father had two wives in Afghanistan and Maha has 16 siblings. She was keen to have the female members of her family and her Afghan friends involved in the research arts and crafts workshop with the view of possible interviews for this research. Some of her female relatives are often confined by classic patriarchal customs to domesticity. The social aspects of workshops were something she felt would benefit the Afghan women in her family. Previous attempts to recruit her and her community found her preoccupied with family matters and the workshops did not eventuate, but Maha signed a consent form and agreed to be interviewed. Maha’s oral history highlights fractured family associations and generational issues that contribute to the control of Afghan women. Her words are represented in black Monotype font.

With an image in my mind of a student burning her books in protest, I was surprised on the scheduled day of interview to find Maha in a distressed state that dictated a casual and unrecorded conversation. I was aware of the University of Western Sydney’s ethical concerns about the participants’ emotional wellbeing. That day, I found myself in an ethical dilemma. To maintain professional and personal integrity I chose not to use the audio-recorder, as it seemed morally wrong to record her anguish. Instead, I define this as a personal interview conducted by the researcher face-to-face. I listened to Maha’s account and have fashioned her biographical interview into a
sociological text. Her narrative brings to attention the inherent complexities of Muslim tribal patriarchal and societal protocols that are imported, transposed, and relocated within Australian society.

**My husband said he is taking another wife**

The usual greeting, three air kisses and general inquiries about family members, was enough to see that Maha was troubled. “Is everything OK?” I asked her. “My husband has left me; he is going to take another woman. I am worried because this is my second marriage, the Afghan community will blame me, they will say I am not a good wife”, she replied.

Marriage is encouraged in Afghanistan and Maha reminisced about her first marriage. When she and her family arrived in Pakistan after fleeing Afghanistan, she was told by her father that he had arranged for her to go to Australia to be married. Maya flew to Australia and met her husband-to-be; they married and he encouraged her to dress in a more Western style without the headscarf. She was happy to do this because she wanted to fit in with his friends. She had two babies a boy and then a girl, a year and a half apart. She often refers to her loneliness at that time and how she missed her parents. Tragedy struck a few years later when her young son was killed in a freak accident. Maha believes that her husband blamed her for his grief; like many Afghan men, he esteemed their son over their daughter. She recalled that they both struggled with grief for several years before she had another son, yet her marriage never recovered and her husband took another wife. Maha never confirmed nor denied that he had concurrent wives which is normally the Afghan practice, but prohibited in Australia, Maha said, “I was shocked to find myself in this situation; I had no say in the matter.”

To deal with such grief, Maha told me that she focused on her children. She joined in women’s groups at the local mosque, she began to wear her hijab as a sign of reverence, and became very involved in supporting refugees in her local community. She organised driving lessons for many of her Afghan friends so that they would not be isolated across the suburbs and she received an award from the local council. Over the years, her parents immigrated, her younger sisters married (Afghan men), and she was again part of a large extended family, this time in Australia.
After 11th September 2001, her community work received a lot of attention and local women’s groups frequently invited her to be their guest. Maha shared that “my mother was worried about my public profile in community work as a single woman.” She was repeatedly encouraged to re-marry because traditional Afghan elders were uncomfortable that she was involved in civic work. In Afghanistan, many women are cocooned within extended family compounds, and it is a foreign idea to Afghan men that a woman would be in demand at community functions.

In 2002, Maha was invited to go to Afghanistan with one of the women’s groups she supported. She imagined going back to her old school and to the house she was born in. She recounted how she could see herself running barefooted along the street playing with her friends, how memories came rushing back to her about life as a student, talking excitedly with her friends, struggling with her school books; she could hardly wait to get to Kabul. Instead, what she found shocked her: her family home was damaged and dirty. She said she did not even know the people who were living there. The house that had held a special place in her heart was incongruent with her childhood memories.

The day before she was to fly back to Australia, her paternal uncle arrived with a young man. She had never seen this man before, but he wanted to marry her. Maha told him, “No, I have to go back home to my children.” She was shaken that her uncle had even considered she would agree to marry someone from Afghanistan. Yet she already knew from the conversation that her uncle had other ideas because it is normal for Afghan women to follow the requests of tribal elders. After telephone conversations with her parents in Australia and patriarchal elders in her father’s province, she was asked to consider the proposal overnight.

The following day her uncle and her potential new husband came to get her decision. “He promised that he would assist me in my community work and support my education. So, I agreed to marry him because of the promises he had made. Inshalla.” The marriage, Maha said, was such a rush that there was no sense of occasion and she remembered feeling overwhelmed. She was concerned for her children: what if they didn’t like him?
When her second husband arrived in Australia he got a job and a car, and loved the freedoms his new life in Australia provided him. He sent money home to his father and his father’s two wives, his seven brothers and their families, and his four half-siblings whose lives, Maha indicated, were poverty stricken. Her husband sponsored his youngest brother to immigrate through the Australian family sponsorship program. When his brother arrived in Australia, he lived for several years with Maha and her children until his own wife and small son arrived. After a few years, there was talk that Maha’s husband would take another woman, another wife who could give him a son. Maha was aware that this might happen at any time, even though having multiple spouses is considered an offence of bigamy and is illegal in Australia. The day we had arranged the interview was the day after her husband had walked out of their house with his brother. I saw Maha’s distress as slowly the possibility dawned on her that the two brothers had used marriage to her as a way of gaining access to Australia. She explained, “He has left me with a dishonoured name, the Afghan community always blames the woman.” After nine years of being married for the second time, she was crying herself to sleep. She told me as I was preparing to leave, “I am not well enough to discuss with my husband; I leave it to the men in my family to argue my future with him. This is how things work in my culture.”

It is worth mentioning here that, because of prolonged contact with Australian society, the rigid patterns of classic patriarchal practices can become blurred and forgotten for Afghan women like Maha who have lived in Australia for over 20 years. Being candid about her relationships, Maha found it hard to believe that her husband saw her as an escape from Afghanistan for himself and his brother. She refers to another wife or another woman from a Western perspective and used both terms interchangeably. This also indicates the decoding many Afghan women play in the context of marriage within the various tribal and linguistics groups of Afghanistan, roles that are deeply entrenched and bring into focus the different modes of betrothal. It was not until she returned to visit Afghanistan that traditional cultural practices were imposed on her. Maha did not regard this situation with her husband as bigamy because marriage in Afghanistan is mostly structured by religion and cultural traditions and therefore, in the absence of an official Australian registration, marriage is not seen as bigamy but polygamy, which is acceptable by the Afghan Constitution and Islamic Sharia law.
Maha has been admired by many for her strength working with Afghan women in Australia to fund abandoned children in Afghanistan as a single mother, since the events of 11th September 2001. Up until this interview, I had not expected to see the impact of patriarchal pull and practices imposed on Afghan women living in Australia like Maha. First impressions greatly influence how one is seen and how one is treated and I admired someone who publicly challenged the Australian stereotypical perception of a veiled Muslim woman. This interview unveiled the intersectional issues that criss-cross throughout the lives of women such as Maha, and exposed palimpsest layers interwoven and entangled with the overlay of generational patriarchal practices.

Both young women and young men in Afghanistan are subject to arranged marriages. In fact, Afghan women living in Australia prefer that their sons and daughters marry Afghans despite having to overcome obstacles of distance, Afghan tribal culture and strict patriarchal and religious codes of behaviour. For example, when Maha’s Australian-born daughter became of marrying age, Maha’s family found a handsome and wealthy Afghan man for her to marry. These criteria enticed her daughter to go to Afghanistan to marry her unseen husband and live in his village. Her daughter’s Australian life was one of certain freedoms, and soon after the initial excitement of being in Afghanistan, the country of her family, she became desperately unhappy confined in a village compound. Maha noted that this union was unfortunate. Her daughter fell pregnant and it took a lot of persuading for her new husband’s family to agree for Maha’s daughter and her baby to come back to Australia. The situations of Maha and her daughter convey the power of tribal elders who often define the role of women and resist any modernising influences that might contest patriarchal authority.

A study on the Afghan family by the Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2013, p. 16) cites a failure to produce sons and heirs as a social stigma in Afghanistan and a cause to take another wife. Afghan women are expected to only socialise within the family unit and unaccompanied activities are not acceptable by many Afghan men and women. The attitudes of Maha’s second husband and his brother explicitly convey the influence of such ancestral
patriarchal cultural circumstances. As Dupree (2004) notes, in Afghanistan “fertility was always a measure of a woman’s prestige. Childlessness was a disaster and the inability to produce sons caused much anguish” (p. 321).

This story brings to light how Maha has transitioned from identifying exclusively with Afghan traditional and cultural practices. She has come to understand Australian societal laws and values. Through her contact with Australian people, she sees herself as part of a group that shares the same geographical and public environment, subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations as other Australians. In other words, Maha’s story draws attention to a point in time where managing and living across the extremes of two cultures in one location becomes a struggle, unlike acculturation where members of one cultural group adopt the beliefs and behaviours of another group.

Mok and Morris (2012) and Kern, Lee, Aytug, and Brett, (2012) suggest people who adapt to a bi-cultural way of being may have a higher social knowledge than those with a mono-cultural perspective. Maha is typical of someone who has a deep involvement in two cultures and has a mindset that carries across both her old and new cultures. She complies with generational issues that cover the family she left behind while navigating a way forward in her Australian context for her young Australian family. Kern, Lee, Aytug, and Brett, (2012) suggest that “cultural empathy between two cultures is at play when engaged in a negotiation in the other party’s mainstream culture” (p. 175). Maha has a complex knowledge structure that is easily accessible and easily activated by the specific cultural context in which she finds herself. Cultural empathy is played out in Maha’s life when she understands the significance of maintaining her family’s Muslim faith and friendships with other Muslim families in Australia, and when she is directed by Afghan elders. Again, cultural empathy is played out in Australia with her children’s education and within her volunteer role to assist her Afghan diaspora in Australia: this shows how Maha and her children traverse the mainstream culture of both Afghanistan and Australia.
Maha’s account brings into view the intersections that overlap and impact Afghan women’s paternalist obedience. She contextualises the intersections that work together to support the often-invisible aspects of the subordination of women. Likewise, to paraphrase Crenshaw (1991), in her life the dynamics of intersectionality exist where masculine hierarchies maintain the objectification and exploitation of women. Maha’s story also brings into focus the practice of prearranged marriages with Afghan/Australian women and men from Afghanistan. The incongruity of old compliances by Australian/Afghan women, now protected by Australian legislation against customs such as polygamy, is sometimes something to which elders are indifferent. Religion, not the state, censors Afghan marriage and men are legitimately able to take multiple wives. Older men and women who traditionally view women as a commodity for exchange of money or a bride price uphold arranged marriages for their Australian born daughters. Dreher and Ho (2009, p. 24) observe there are frequent requests in Australia to recognise polygamous marriages. In effect, in doing so some Afghan women import and perpetuate their own triad of patriarchal submission from their country of origin to the host country. It is understandable that by conforming, women feel that a union with an Afghan man for their daughters, either from Afghanistan or Australia, remains the only way they can maintain their traditional culture and maintain their matriarchal position within the classic patriarchal Afghan community where many women are subordinate to the senior women in the extended family.

Indeed, these extremes intersect with classic patriarchy and, according to Kandiyoti (1988), exert a “powerful influence on the shaping of women’s gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology” (p. 273). This strict male-dominated rule means the Afghan social structure not only perpetuates gender separation but demands ethical obedience, linking family honour to female virtue by restoring women to their proper place as the bearers of Afghan family culture. Domination by Afghan tribal and Islamic religious compliance ensures Maha’s female honour can be protected and controlled by her father and his Tajik ancestral male kin-folk, signifying the persistence of patriarchy and emphasising the rubrics of conflicting cultures, that test Maha’s resilience when frequenting her Afghan and Australian cultures. These are some of the complex,
layered issues that Afghan women a cope with while traversing from one culture to another, issues generally invisible to most Australians.

Afghan men coming from war-torn Afghanistan seem largely unaware that for Afghan/Australian women who are confident, educated, and often financially independent, a polygamous relationship is unacceptable. Young Afghan women in Australia become used to the Australian way of life, a privileged life compared to Afghanistan. Young Afghan men who have developed under the shadow of war and conflict find it hard to accept the Australian-ness of their female counterparts. Accepting an Australian way of life presents as an undesirable characteristic and unacceptable to some Afghan conservatives (Moghadam, 1993). I have since heard from Maha that she is engaged to an older man in Afghanistan. This demonstrates the power of masculine hierarchies and how they maintain the objectification of Afghan women from afar.

Maha’s recount reflects Moghadam’s (1993) framework that rests on three elements: “the persistence of patriarchal structures, the role of the neo-patriarchal state, and the contradictory effects of social change” (p. 122). Moghadam brings into focus classic patriarchy in “the strict sense of gender arrangements based on patrilocal residence and patrilineal descent” (1993, p. 122), and demonstrates the woman’s status as controlled by laws that render women as dependants. The joint Afghan family household benefits from inter-generational wealth. For example, Maha’s profile in Australia has remunerations for her male kin-folk in Afghanistan as it provides a profitable dowry transaction for the family elders in Afghanistan. At the same time, they maintain the fabric of observance and custom because in Afghanistan it goes against Islamic rule for women to marry men from outside the Muslim faith.

Maha’s story enriches our understanding of the roles and positions she must circumnavigate to maintain her cultural heritage while living in Australia. Her story shows culture as a powerful ethos and an often-unconscious influence; it brings to light the difficulties Afghan women can experience in maintaining their cultural integrity in Australia society. Clearly, one’s culture is embedded in one’s existence and shapes the thinking of many generations. This is a key point because Australian
Anglocentric culture is equally as powerful. This is evident in how an Orientalist memory has morphed into a hegemonic way of brokering public opinion in the twenty-first century about the Muslim Other. This serves to preserve the ethnocentrism that many Australians demonstrate when they judge other cultures by their inherent belief of their superiority, particularly concerning language, customs, and beliefs.

Researchers have seldom studied those who struggle identifying with both one’s ethnic-cultural group and one’s society of involuntary re-location. For instance, Australians maintain an opinionated view on women’s roles and pay little attention to the ways in which race and gender work in tandem to maintain the uneven power and privilege for Afghan women now living in Australia. Marriage for an Afghan woman in Australia is fraught with patriarchal cultural practices projected from Afghan elders who oppose Australian legislation. Australian law prohibits arranged and forced marriage as well as multiple marriages. Afghan women who have lived in Australia for decades are prejudiced by Afghan male elders to follow Afghan culture, and some women feel obligated to abide by family pressure to maintain their tribal ethnicity and Muslim religion and culture and appease parents.

Conclusion

The knowledge-sharing of Maha’s and Nasifah’s unrecorded interviews makes explicit the powerlessness of Afghan women to go against traditional patriarchal practices. The participating women’s stories raise our awareness of the residue of war, the physical and emotional damage that they have experienced and is not apparent. Individually, Nasifah’s and Maha’s narratives exemplify the complex, multi-faceted considerations implicit in the research question. Nasifah personally observed the intersection of religious fundamentalism and political conflict that resulted in the execution of 17 women. She struggles with the visual images fixed in her mind, images that conflict with her memories of her younger years in her country of birth.

Maha, traverses the intersection of two cultures. Her emotional attachment to her extended family in Afghanistan is evident. At the same time, Australia recognises her as a leader in her
Australian/Afghan community. Her public profile in Australia cuts across classic patriarchal practices in Afghanistan. Maha possesses cultural competence that bridges the cultural gap and allows her to maintain a cross-cultural empathy. And both narratives in different ways - the story of gender violence experienced by Nasifah and the classic patriarchal practice. Stories, that highlight the personal strength required for these women to traverse the intersectional layers of traditional cultural and political patriarchal practices of Afghanistan while living in Australia, and often while perceived and publicly portrayed as the Orientalised Muslim Other.
Chapter Seven: A tapestry of resistance, stories of conflict and drama
Chapter Seven: A tapestry of resistance, stories of conflict and drama

Introduction

The stories of Noor Ali, Reha and Nageba presented in this chapter narrate a tapestry of conflict and trauma in the fabric of Afghanistan’s culture of classic patriarchal dominance and religious fundamentalism. Their experiences bring to our attention an unimaginable world. The residue of conflict is highly visible in the image of the King’s Palace (Fig. 37) and is an example of palimpsest where something has been altered but still bears visible traces of its earlier form. I was surprised when I introduced this image to Noor Ali while I was recruiting Afghan women. The image was soul-stirring for Noor Ali and was instrumental in securing her audio-recorded interview. The women’s stories provide additional insights into how Afghan women now living in Australia have transitioned into Australian migrant diasporas.

Preamble

Noor Ali, a Hazara woman, was very business like, she wore a smart knee length navy skirt, white shirt, a navy jacket and black shoes with heels, her hair was cut in a modern bob; she had a mischievous smile and a gentleness that belied her seriousness about the topic of Afghan women. A single mother of a daughter and three sons she said “I am concerned about my younger sons being deprived of male leadership and losing their sense of Afghan Muslim culture”. At the time of the interview Noor Ali had lived in Australia for over 15 years. As an Australian citizen, she brings her narrative into the Australian social landscape: her story and her valour in the face of war challenges the dominant representation of the Muslim Other in contemporary Australia.

She attended Kabul University and as a student wore miniskirts and denim jeans; she did not wear a burqa or a head scarf in Afghanistan. She was a school teacher before she married in her twenties. Her narrative is a window into the socio-cultural history of Afghan life in the twentieth century and portrays the tensions that have ebbed and flowed between the city urbanised and feudalist tribal groups; the Sunni and Shiite Muslims.
Noor Ali recalls after Decree No. 7 was implemented to initiate social programs (Moghadam 1993), the privileges gained over four decades, and in the name of women’s rights, were abruptly abolished; this was in the period following the Russian invasion into Afghanistan when the tribal freedom fighters were endeavouring to wrestle their Muslim state from the communist Soviets. More specifically, as a Hazara woman, Noor Ali gives an account of being part of the Hazara minority group of Shiite Muslims\(^{16}\); Hazara’s are the most persecuted people in Afghanistan (Saikal, 2012; Sparrow, 2005). The Hazara peoples have suffered violence at the hands of the Pashtu Sunni Muslim majority (Rasid 2001, p.198). “Sunnis believe the leadership passed to Abu Bakr, one of the Prophet’s early followers. Shia belief is that Ali, the cousin of Mohammed, was the rightful leader” (Sparrow 2005, p. 27). This draws attention to the ongoing vilification of the Hazara race by religious fundamentalism in Afghanistan by the Pashtuns who claimed racial superiority, political authority, and denied Hazara people human rights\(^{17}\). The past atrocities, victimisation, and intergenerational anguish directed at Hazara people by Pashtu Sunni Muslims, the controlling mujahedeen, were clearly audible throughout Noor Ali’s recorded interview.

Crenshaw’s (1991) concept of intersectionality is an example of overlapping systems of oppression. Being an Afghan Hazara woman means that Noor Ali experiences a dual-gendered subjugation; she carries the weight of history with her physical appearance that serves the purpose of sectarian divide and persecution, and as an Afghan woman she has been marginalised internationally. Therefore, she must deal with dual contradictions and incompatibilities within her Afghan culture that are not always visible under the category of an Afghan woman.

\(\text{16} \) The Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing in 1995. The conference outcomes document, the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), was adopted by all member states. It recognises that ‘factors such as age, disability, socio-economic position, or membership in a particular ethnic or racial group could compound discrimination on the basis of sex, to create multiple barriers for women’s empowerment and advancement.’ Pittaway & Bartolmei, 2001, p. 23).

\(\text{17} \) For a more detailed account of the Hazar people and their enslavement, formalised laws for the removal of their land and excessive taxation see; Swallow 2005 \textit{From under a leaky roof Afghan refugees in Australia}
Noor Ali’s unstructured interview took on the form of a normal everyday conversation about relationships, generational and societal issues, gender and ethnicity. I realised these topics were not independent but interrelated, different forms of inequality in a country that has a culture of firearms and has been under the shadow of war for decades. Her narrative leads up to her experience of a convoluted war and the position she found herself in after a random bomb attack and the role she was forced to take. *Her voice is in blue Monotype font.*

**Noor Ali’s story; He shot me in the stomach, accidentally**

*My husband was an angry man. I don’t think he meant to shoot me. He was cleaning his gun and it accidently went off. It’s not like in Australia; everyone has guns in Afghanistan.* This incident happened earlier in Noor Ali’s marriage; she went on to explain the circumstances that contributed to her husband’s anger. *Yah, my culturally, when a man dies the wife must marry one of the brothers, so when my father-in-law passed away my mother-in-law was pregnant with my husband.* Noor Ali looked at me to see if I understood and continued. *When the child was born, um, my husband was born, then, uh, she need to pick one of the brothers-in-laws.* In these cases, the widow and children are integrated into the patriarchal family community; they are assimilated into the community of men. “How many brothers did she have to choose from?” I asked her. *Three, three, yah three, and she picked the oldest one because the oldest one was the village leader and um with lots of power also, before government um so a wealthy man, but he had another wife and six I think kids.* If she chose not to marry her husband’s brother she would have no position in Afghan society, nowhere to go. Noor Ali’s mother-in-law knew her brother-in-law was not happy to have to marry her, the other wife’s ah jealousy. She was trying to, ah, put her in trouble to get bashed by the husband, and those things, yeah. *How hard it was at the beginning when she picked him because he didn’t want to marry her. My mother-in-law was the same age as his oldest daughter … So, when mother-in-law picked him, he couldn’t say no because it was a shame to reject your brother’s widow, but he gave hard time her and her kids … slowly and surely she tried to, ah, earn, ah, his love and find a place in his heart and then she became the preferred wife.* She did this so her children would be fairly treated.

Noor Ali was aware that her husband, as a young boy, was low in the family hierarchy; he was the last to receive any opportunities. In the safety and privacy of Noor Ali’s home, her mother-in-law spoke freely and shared with Noor Ali her experiences of being widowed so young and the ill
treatment her son had received as a child. My husband never spoke of the treatment he received from his stepfather, who was also his uncle. In Hazara culture there is normally no relationship between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, you have no choice but to abide by her rules because you are in her home. The difference was because I was living in my mother’s house. My brothers had left long ago to fight the Communist government and my mother was elderly and alone, so I was not bound by custom to move into my husband’s family compound. In these circumstances the husband comes to the girl’s home rather than take the girl away.

Noor Ali’s youngest child was a baby when the mujahedeen took control of the government. With such political instability, conflict erupted between the tribal groups. The Pashtuns, Tajik, and Hazara were struggling to maintain cultural traditions and everyday she could see and hear heavy gunfire. So every day you could see your neighbour get hit by heavy gun and it happened to me, after my neighbour hit by heavy gun, um, their six members of the family died instantly. That affect my kids a lot because we were, after the incident we ran to see what happened, um ah, we, my kids and I could see that, all de body parts everywhere and after that I could not stay there, I said no I have to leave Kabul.

The conflict decreased in severity during the winter months. During this time, she spoke to her husband about leaving Afghanistan but he refused to leave. As the weather improved, the fighting began to escalate in Kabul between the mujahedeen and the Taliban. Suddenly it got worse and the Taliban came very close to ... Kabul. She put her baby in the pram and late one afternoon she left with her children, her brother’s nephew – a young man - and his wife to go to the family’s village in the mountains. There was a sense of urgency and the three children were running to keep up with her nephew. Noor Ali’s voice heightened as she explained. I had my baby, my youngest son was a baby, I was a bit slow and also I was pulling the big pram with my baby and my three eldest kids ... with my husband’s nephew and his wife ... suddenly a bus came, a bus came and I asked them you put, um, take the bus. She yelled at her children, panicking, Go, I will come and they, they knew I would come. We didn’t know that suddenly the bomb, um, the aeroplane come and throw bombs, they left with the bus and that was the last thing I saw and I was walking and ... Her voice faded.

As the bus pulled away she remembers hot air rushing past her face. I could see, I could even feel you know when the bomb comes you know the air pushes that’s why I didn’t go and everyone was running; I couldn’t go forward because it was the matter of life and death. People asking me to leave the pram and just take the baby and
I thought my children had perished with my nephew and his wife on that bus. She returned home to tell her husband what had happened, hoping her children had gone to the village in the Northern Province where they had family and cousins. I needed to find out what had happened to my children. Then I, it was around two weeks but my husband and my relatives … say. Oh, they will be fine in the Northern Province and I can’t believe and slowly, slowly went to check around and see because people are bringing list of survivor. She was convinced the bomb had engulfed her children.

As the debris was cleared in the surrounding suburbs she would walk around the city checking on the lists of survivors that were being displayed on buildings and in Mosques. And I saw, um, handwriting it was my nephew’s handwriting and I asked who brought this list? And a driver said he brought it. I said, when you going back? He said today. I said, Ok, I will give you a letter can you give this to the guy who wrote the list? The driver said yes. Because it was his handwriting but there was no name of my kids or no signature.

Her mind was calculating, she needed to make sure the writer was her nephew or she could put both in danger because of their Hazara ethnicity. Even though she was convinced it was her nephew’s handwriting she prayed out loud, to her nephew and her children. OK, if you are really, really alive. I saw the list and it was your handwriting please tell me if my children are alive, if they are alive tell me how to get them or how you can send them to me. When I saw the list and the handwriting I was … that time was something …

After a weeks of prayer and anxiety, to her shock and relief, her cousin returned to her home holding the hands of her three small children. It was like an epiphany, she explained, her prayers had been answered. After the excitement of their reunion, Noor Ali described how her cousin managed to get her children to her. She came with, ah, some her relatives that they are connection with Taliban, so they travel to Kabul to buy something for the family so they asked her if you are going with these kids next door. Her cousin had married a young Taliban so they travelled though outlying villages, pretending the children were theirs, they skirted the main highways to avoid attention to her and Noor Ali’s children’s Hazara birthright. I told my husband that no time to stay because I knew that things will happen. Sooner or later whatever, things will happen, Inshallah … My baby was three years old when I arrived in Australia.
Drawing on the insights of Noor Ali’s experience, it seems patriarchal rule and knowledge is staunch even in the face of the family’s safety. Intersectionality is used to frame the various relationships between politics and gender violence and ethnic fundamentalism in Noor Ali’s story. To help comprehend Noor Ali’s oral history, it is necessary to look through the lens of a classic patriarchal social system.

A tourist snapshot of the Afghan King’s Palace (Fig. 37), burnt-out and neglected, provided the occasion for Noor Ali to share her thoughts from when she lived in the precinct 30 years ago. In fact, her brother had worked in the lower levels of the palace where the King’s private collection of Western artefacts was stored. As a young woman, her brother had taken her hand and walked her through the palace and the gardens. She didn’t see the burnt-out palace in the snapshot she held in
her hand. Instead, in her mind’s eye she saw the excitement and grandeur of the modern palace, the flora from around the world her brother had tended to, her conversation brought the King’s Palace back to life, to its former glory.

Noor Ali’s story is an example of long-established patriarchal power intersecting with weapons of war to have multiple effects on women. Her husband and his family’s snub towards the whereabouts of the children and his rebuff to his wife’s concern for their safety exposes his masculine authority. In other words, conflict threatened his cultural world view and masculine honour. Leung and Chiu (2010) claim that men “will increase their adherence to cultural conventions and through this strategy obtain a sense of symbolic immortality—the body may perish after death, but the culture one belongs to will continue to propagate” (p. 726). Unrelenting conflict, justifies withdrawing human and women’s rights in Afghanistan and is another form of retrieving masculine honour, thus rendering women like Noor Ali vulnerable firstly to the probability of being attacked and or injured physically and emotionally because of her Hazara ethnicity; and secondly, to the deteriorating economic and social conditions wrought on all Afghan women and girls because of political violence and destruction.

This narrative gives a voice to the patterns inherent in Afghan traditional culture that causes inequality for Afghan women. I agree with Ahmed-Gosh (2006) who argues domination perpetuates the privileging of masculinity which includes polygamous and levirate marriages. This ensures Afghan women are immobilised, making them invisible within their own communities. As an Australian citizen, Noor Ali has staunchly remained a single woman, resisting the pressure she feels in Australia that if she or her daughter marries, they do so according to Hazara culture. Circuitously, Noor Ali prefers her children’s marriage partners are related, for example, distant relatives or, from the same religion. The patriarchal cultural mind-set of Noor Ali derives from strict social control of women in Afghanistan as “part of the project of re-claiming a mythical past, or guarding cultural identity” (Moghadam, 1993, p. 132). Unwittingly, Afghan women thus perpetuate their own subordination; women maintain stability of family life and custom and are judged by other Afghans on their staunch form of Afghan propriety and, thereby become the upholders of Afghan customs.
perpetuating patriarchal structures. Their stories are a purposeful composite of experience that focuses on cultural practices Afghan women respect but conflict with their life in Australia, for example the negativity directed at the religion of Islam, and to veiled Muslim women, and the myths and generalisations associated with the cultural practice of arranged marriage that is still legal in Afghanistan. These complex cultural traditions are often confused by western societies with forced and child marriages and marriage for money. There is further discussion that brings into focus the diversified issues that Afghan women encounter living in Australia, on page 194.

**Patriarchal dominance, religious fundamentalism, and episodic Western hegemony**

Patriarchy is a thread linking the stories of the prolonged struggle between traditional Afghan patriarchal practices and episodic Western hegemony. The women’s oral histories provide valuable insights into the cluster of intersecting issues in Afghanistan that exploded and forced many women/people to seek asylum. Their stories convey the horrors of war and cruelty and clearly depict the emotional layers of experience Afghan women bear and bring to Australia where they are often positioned as the Muslim Other. Noor Ali’s narrative conveys how entrenched, enculturated and inflexible patriarchy protocols, imperceptible to many Australians, fortify the social structures of culturally imbedded patriarchy to maintain authority over women, irrespective of their geographical location.

**Reha’s Story**

The following section is the oral history narrated by Reha. Her story explores ethical issues that accelerated the suffering of Afghan women. The empiricist theorist Locke (1632–1704), advocated we only have direct experience of the plethora of our own consciousness that comprise our emotions such as our thoughts, feelings, memories and so on in enormous abundance. Whereas, war, as depicted by popular media, is presented to us briefly before it disappears. Once the visual is gone, it is retained in the memory for a very brief time. This goes some way to explain the briefness of Reha’s story of life under the Taliban as opposed to her detailed escape by boat, a story that specifies her thoughts, feelings, and memories while confronting the unknown. Reha’s story exposes the ethical challenges of refugees and the way visual representation influences our knowledge and
facilitates our response towards the suffering of the Muslim Other as ‘illegal immigrants’ or ‘boat people’ in Australia.

Preamble
Reha is a proud woman; her colourful hijab is decorated with coloured pins and a lacy brooch. Reha arrived in Australia with her husband and two small daughters more than 14 years ago; she has had a son since arriving in Australia. Reha is a very confident woman but suffers bouts of severe depression. One of her proudest achievements is having her eldest daughter, who hopes to be a teacher, complete school in Australia. Reha has no family in Australia other than her husband and children. Her story, in two parts, chronicles being discovered by the Taliban ‘teaching’, and her escape fraught with anxiety. *Reha’s voice is in Monotupe blue font.*

Educated at Kabul University, Reha was a primary school teacher; she was confined to her home for nearly eight years during the Soviet War in Afghanistan (1979–1989) and during the mujahedeen and Taliban conflict (1989–2001). After her husband’s long-standing family business was decimated in the Russian invasion, Reha operated a private school, sometimes known as a secret school or a ghost school, under the guise of her husband’s religious academy. Each day when the children arrived at her home, Reha would carefully instruct them in reading and writing prepared around the parables told in the Koran.

A clandestine school during the mujahedeen and Taliban regime

First Interview
Reha grew up in the days when Dr Najibullah was President of Afghanistan (1987–1992). He was considered a more modern leader, as detailed in Chapter Six. *In Afghanistan; in that time, it was Dr Najibullah Government. My wedding time was same like Australia, like freedom everything. After I married, after one month the Islamic government come and everything is change. But still we were there, we live in Kabul. But, uh, life was not the same like before. Yeah, it was so hard for us. Under the Taliban I was teacher in primary school but, I couldn’t after that time, I could not come to school.*
I was at home for long time, for maybe about eight years something, after that we moved to Kandahar. But that time it was Taliban regime, during Taliban I was in Kandahar and my husband and I work from home, I was frightened. Life became dangerous for educated people. If ordinary Afghans complained about the mujahedeen’s and Taliban’s opposition to education for girls and employment of women, they became targeted as traitors and communists. Reha and her husband set up a clandestine school and worked from home. Secret yeah. Secret teacher at home just kids come to me and I pray Koran. Outside people know I read Koran, but when for kids come to me I teach like school, I was frightened.

Too much dangerous, it was very hard for me, very hard two or three times my neighbours my friends they told me, “Taliban know here is it private school you have to stop for a while”. Two, three times I stopped for a while because Taliban come around to my house to see who is coming, if kids coming something. It was very dangerous, very dangerous. If she and her husband were caught teaching the children they could be beaten or executed. After that, one night one man old man, he come and he told us “Taliban now know that you help your husband, what you are doing here”. That time we left Afghanistan. It was early in morning I don’t remember the time but early in morning that time I had two daughters. We come by walk, up to the taxi station, we took taxi and the taxi driver brings us to the border of Afghanistan. They took nothing with them so that it would look as though they were going on a casual family outing.

Taliban Fundamentalism

Multiple manifestations of women’s human rights violations were imposed on Afghan women by the mujahedeen and the Taliban, adding another layer to the residue of war. Reha’s narrative gives an understanding of strict classic patriarchal dominance merged with Taliban fundamentalism that resulted in a cluster of intersections, and for Reha, relentless anxiety in defying the Taliban’s directives. Samuels and Ross-Sheriff (2008) see intersectionality as a tool to campaign against patriarchal practices and release the stories of Afghan women. They have examined the narratives of Afghan women in America who were violated and humiliated by the Taliban regime and the bombing of Afghanistan. They analysed the ways in which Crenshaw’s (1991) model has been used as a rich intervention to the multiple forms of disadvantage to find more productive and appropriate ways to survey the many forms of domination imposed on Afghan women. They found that those
who view Afghan women through a Western stereotypical representation fail to see their tenacious will to survive.

Reha’s story brings to light the Taliban’s denial of basic human rights for women and the dire circumstances if women were to breach their directives. Her account illuminates the triad of gender inequality, abuse, and humiliation of Afghan women who were imprisoned in their homes during the mujahedeen and Taliban regimes. Reha authenticates the emotional scars caused by cultural conflict. Day-by-day she was exposed to fear and uncertainty, as well as the dread of being caught resisting Taliban rules. When these burdens come together, the fear and panic experienced by Afghan women was further impacted by the classic patriarchal construct.

Such violence, discrimination, and the denial of women’s rights in Afghanistan saw the boundaries between classic patriarchy and religious control blurred because the mujahedeen Islamic fighters, with the covert backing of the United States, refused to accept the communist Soviet Russian occupation of Afghanistan (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Butler, 2003). Pursuing this line further, the Taliban and its counterpart the Pakistani Pashtu faction consolidated control over Afghanistan. The regime’s jurisprudence incorporated interpretations of Sharia law and Pashtu pre-Islamic tribal codes of practice. Consequently, the Taliban shocked the world when they imposed a nationwide system of conduct that forbade the education of women and imposed punishments such as beatings, amputation, and execution. These actions destabilised the patriarchal social system that for centuries had offered Afghan women a level of economic dependability.

Moghadam (1993) suggests fundamental political operatives may appear to be against the state. In most cases, she says, “the process of social change is marked by a disorienting collision of tradition and modernity which calls cultural identity into question and politicises gender relations and the position of women” (p. 125). During periods of change, for example, women frequently become the marker of cultural and political objectives, as during the Marxist revolution in Afghanistan where women were encouraged to be autonomous. Reha’s story highlights the way political and social changes in society affected the lives of Afghan women.
Finally, women like Reha, in Butler’s words (2003), give a human face to Afghan women who have lived for many years in a heightened state of fear because of gender inequality. They have been denied freedom of mobility and, with the elimination of women’s human rights, their family’s economic survival was vulnerable. In what artist Omarzad refers to as “gender apartheid” (cited in Oates, 2008, p.14) women were virtually banished, put under house arrest, their voice, and their education, career, and health prohibited, they were deemed as inconsequential and therefore lawfully ignored. In this society, women were uncritically brutally beaten, publicly flogged, and killed for violating Taliban orders.

In her second interview, Reha told how she and her husband had no other option but to flee their culture and their country to survive. Blinded by fear and blind to the consequences, Reha and her family walked into the unfamiliar world of people smugglers. Reha’s narrative brings into view the layers of transnational ruthlessness in the world of people smugglers. In analysing Reha’s narrative it seems she underplayed the years of mujahedeen and Taliban control; although she expressed fear and anxiety, it was almost as if she had become accustomed to the highly-structured nature of misogynist violence. It was the unknown route of escape, the unknown antagonist, that Reha was interested in validating in her interview.

**Interview 2**

This second part of Reha’s oral history is about herself, her husband and her two small daughters, leaving Afghanistan. This is the sub-text to the plight of refugees; as an extension of Taliban fundamentalism Reha’s narrative embodies how their rule lead to large numbers of asylum seekers fleeing Afghanistan and the larger scale of human abuse practiced by people smugglers. Her story is told from the vacuum of uncertainty and fear. It highlights Reha’s lack of geographic knowledge, her complete disorientation and her overwhelming concern for the safety of her family, all sandwiched between escaping the Taliban and the felonious actions of the people smugglers. Reha seemed relived when she and her family reached Pakistan and were able to arrange a flight to Malaysia. The exploitation of people smugglers is revealing in this biographical narrative. Clearly,
Reha and her husband thought they were paying for genuine passage to Australia. **Reha’s voice is in Monotype blue font.**

*We went to Malaysia by plane. When we arrived there, there was another guy they come and took from the airport to another hotel. We was over there for ten days. That guy bring for us food and everything after that one night at eight o’clock the guy came and told, let’s us to go to Indonesia. We say it’s safe for us everything? Oh they say “it’s safe the Malaysia, ship is safe you go, there is nothing, you have passports and everything”. And we very happy, we went with that guy to the sea, and the boat come, it’s a very nice boat. After fifteen minutes the boat come and that guy told us “you put in the small boat”. We say, “Oh it’s too small we are me my husband and two kids” but they told “No, it’s not for that it’s for fifteen persons”. Reha, shuffling her feet under her chair, bent over and said, “This was small, we sit like this (indicating a foetal position). We travel from about nine o’clock in the night up till tomorrow morning in this small boat they told us one hour. I say, I have to take some milk, food some drink for my daughter she is three years old, they say “No. You don’t need it; it’s very close Malaysia and Indonesia, they say no”.*

*But one night all night we was on that boat. Ah, in the morning there in the sea another ship come, um, boat come, small boats come it was like catching the fish, fishing boats we sit like this (crouching) under the deck, like the little cabin, in old fishing boat, we were like this, like in a small cupboard. After that we went to the... like forest, it was one house, they paid for us food because during this time from last night till four o’clock tomorrow we no drink, we no food, nothing.*

‘In Indonesia?’ I asked. **Indonesia, she shook her head. We stayed there for one night in the hotel, tomorrow maybe afternoon was I don’t remember, another guy come and told us lets go your airflight, we went to the airport. We had trouble with something, I forgot it, I am not really sure and then we went to Jakarta. That was very hard that time for us, my kids was so small we did not know the language we scared just we scared. Just because it was so hard for us because we left our home, our parents, especially for my mother and father-in-law because I lived with them, they, we left everything. When they could not be processed at the airport they realised there was no way back, and that the people smugglers had taken their money. Her reminiscing and posture implied the enormity and gravity of her situation as she and her husband were shuffled clandestinely from place to place to avoid local authorities.*
When we arrived to the big boat it was so hard on that time the water goes wosh wosh if you goes down, finished. We go inside the boat, we were really scared, really scared to die. When we come that big boat they start to come to Australia we was about eleven days and eleven nights on that boat and we don’t have food and drink, they gave us one bottle, one 25 litre 25, one bottle per family.

Reha’s demeanour changed, she had been telling her story as if she was outside the experience, her expression altered and her voice intensified as she recalled her ordeal. It was evident that she was now inside the story, she spoke quickly.

In 24 hours we don’t have food, my daughter was two years old just I have one small cream milk bottle. Yeah and have two or three condensed milk, two three cans milk was with me just like drop in Saraha’s mouth. I have biscuits just I give them to Sahara me and my husband no, for my daughter (the baby) just milk, a little milk, and ten days on ten days was our, um, food. The one engine was broke down, the water (pump) came to put water (out) that one is no working, our boat was broken we all just crying, just crying. The boat is broken the water coming inside the boat they make all us like one line, they pick the water and bowl and they throw out, they throw out (water) and that time the benzyl the oil is finished. One engine is no working the compass is no working; just say if God is you lucky you make it. But otherwise just say, say ask from God it was really terrible for us. One night, oh my God no one is sleep just everyone just crying, just crying. I could not close (my eyes), in the morning all night sick.

Finally, Reha took a deep breath; she looked to see if I understood what she had told me, she could see that I was shocked and emotional. She seemed satisfied that I understood and I sensed that there was a slight shift in her expression. She was building the anticipation. Her amusement showed as she told me with a wry smile. Then the airplane come.

Then we saw the airplane, every one shouting, ‘Oh my airplane, Oh my airplane’, everyone was comfort. Crying, it was so hard, and airplane, ah, coming give for us a red light, we did not know what’s meaning, they gave us red light, red light. We did not know, but we was very happy on that day about the airplane about fly, five or six times they came and gave for us red light, we did not know that going, gone.

The plane disappeared. It reappeared the following morning, releasing more red flares. And, um, when on that day four o’clock in the afternoon I think, we saw a big boat come, Australian Customs. We was shouting, crying they come and ask us where do you have to go we say we have to go to Australia and the Australian Custom told us you know where you going, we say yes we going to Australia. Four o’clock and when they come inside our
boat they see everyone is sick because we can’t talking because eleven days no food no drink so they bring for us medication, food and our one engine, another engine one, and one for water. They connect cable and after twenty-four hours they took us to Christmas Island somewhere it was we stayed there.

Many levels of patriarchal inequity, fear, and violence have overlapped in Reha’s life but she has been able to navigate them through her comprehension of local Afghan language and traditional practices. Women like Reha, had strategies in place to manipulate the harsh rules that classic patriarchy imposed on them, creating a network of female friends and family members they could trust. An explicit example being the old man, a friend of a friend, who warned Reha the Taliban knew of her school. This knowledge and network made it easier for Reha to cope with an enemy, one that she had known for years (Knapp, 2005, p. 207); rather than the apprehensive and uneasy feelings about things that were unknown, she was helpless against the things being said and done in a foreign country, and in a foreign language.

The story of Reha’s family’s survival is a vital aspect of the emotional layers that intersect in the lives of many asylum seekers. Fear, anxiety and despair are the underlying threads that contribute to the residue of war and continue to impact emotional wellbeing. There is limited research on Afghan women’s detailed views of the realities of war, there is little nuanced understandings of their resilience to multiple roles and the impacts of anxiety (Knapp, 2005). Instead, the hyper-visibility of veiled Afghan and Muslim women by popular media and government rhetoric allows the host country to uphold the dominant stereotype of the Muslim Other as oppressed, alien, and foreign.

Reha’s story accentuates her personal journey from the residue of war, her loss of security, education and opportunity into the world of xenophobia and Islamophobia directed towards ‘boat people’ in Australia. However, out of modesty Reha did not divulge the embarrassing aspects asylum seekers suffer (particularly women) on similar boat voyages (Fig. 38). Afghan women who had previously been segregated from the opposite gender found themselves near strange men; typically, there were no bathroom or toilet facilities on the boat. It was too dangerous to go over the side, “so the men urinated over the hull and the women in their pants” (Mogelson, 2013, p. 24).
Sea sickness added to their uneasiness and meant that they were often too unwell to sleep. The stench was made worse by the noxious smoke of the boat's groaning engine. Reha was dignified in her interview; she used her prevailing sense of humour to veil her humiliation, bringing into focus the arrival of the Australian Customs aircraft.

![Asylum seekers during the second day of their journey, exposed to the elements. 2013.](image)

**Figure 38.** Asylum seekers during the second day of their journey, exposed to the elements. 2013. Photograph by Joel van Houdt

**Nageba’s story**

In contrast to Noor Ali and Reha, Nageba is a single woman; she has a university degree and is employed at a local Migrant Resource Centre. She also works with the Refugee Council of Australia and has developed a high public profile. Her oral history depicts her experiences as a young Hazara woman living in Australia and brings into focus the generational issues from a cross-cultural point of view how she has adapted to life in Australia.
**Preamble**

Nageba ia an attractive young woman with long hair tied on top of her head covered in a hijab giving her the appearance of being taller than she is. Barely 150cm tall she wears black tights and tall heels with a miniskirt and jacket. Her makeup is flawless, contributing to her sense of confidence and worth. Nageba was just 11 years old when her parents escaped from Afghanistan to come to Australia by boat in 2000. As a young girl with no education and no English, she was in detention for two years. After being released, she and her parents spent the next three years living under a temporary protection visa in Tasmania. Since then she has completed a Bachelor of Medical Science degree in Sydney and has a role in several organisations such as ChilOut and Amnesty International. Nageba was a finalist for the Young Human Rights Medal Award, she has also won a Young Woman Award and a Human Rights Award from the University of Technology, Sydney for her work with not-for-profit organisations.

Now in her mid-twenties, she works in a senior role with a local Migrant Research Center. At the time of our conversation Nageba had just become engaged to an Afghan man. She promised to help with my research in any way she could. Recruiting Afghan women to participate in my research program had been difficult. I was still accepting how many Afghan women abide by patriarchal propriety and require permission from the male members of their family to participate in public activities, even in Australia. Nageba signed a consent form and agreed to be interviewed but declined the workshops. Her lack of educational opportunities in her early life in Afghanistan is evident in her dialogue, as is the value she places on an Australian education. Her narrative brings into focus the opportunities for a young Afghan woman educated in Australia. *Her voice is in Monotype blue font.*

On the day of the interview, Nageba spoke of her “divorce” because “he” objected to her public profile. She was naturally upset as she spoke about her broken engagement. *He is an Afghani he’s been in Australia more than I been here, like I been 12 years old, he’s been here 14 years old, he used to work at the bank as a bank manager, he had a bachelor degree. Very well educated you know, and I thought here’s one of a golden opportunity for me. Not many Afghan guys or boys have had the opportunity to finish their education in Australia and go to uni and have incredible jobs like having a bank manager.*
She moved on to describe her activities. Referring to a public presentation she gave for Refugee Week and the plight of internally displaced people in Afghanistan, Nageba continued the conversation. You know … it is a great concern but then in a way when you look at it, as you said, ah, it’s very complex. There’s no single solution for any of this but then once again, if we have people that can escape and if we have people that do not have camps to stay, then that’s going to be another question—what are they going to do? For example, in Africa we have a lot of camps, but in Afghanistan we don’t. So if we talk about those people we have fortunate and unfortunate …

As I said every family has gone through a different experience, we, for example, my own family, grandparents’ family, they couldn’t make it, they couldn’t come by boat, they didn’t have the money, you know, and if—actually my father’s father had the money and he said I’m going to sell what I have in order for your family to survive. My old grandfather. He said I am seventy years old. I’m, I’m ready to die here.

Yeah, basically you know as I said, um, it’s not the people that came on the boat have paid money you know not everybody have (paid), some people have only paid a little bit. Some people might paid as much as we did, you know, and sometimes people actually promise that, ‘OK, You know my, this is where my father lives in Afghanistan’ that’s introduced to the smuggler and the smuggler knows where the father live. ‘OK if you do not pay him back then something’s going to happen to your grandpop.’ And as a result in Australia we have many people that are in debt. Yes. You know and they are all trying to pay back, you know.

You know as I said if there was a way that you can escape that persecution in the world. And you know especially with Hazara because with their distinct facial feature, they just too, too’ um’ to easy to target, extremely easy … for example in Pakistan how they getting targeted? By their looks. Even in Afghanistan you going everywhere you will know who Hazara are because of the Mongolian features they have.

And this is what I try to work that we don’t want the future generation to grown-up with the same thoughts of division within the cities. Once again as I said every person is a human being. You know and, um, we need to learn to respect each other for who we are. And um. But once again we are talking about people, elders that are, have spent their lives in Afghanistan for a very long time, it’s not going to be easy to shift their mind’s state you know.

And then, and in those parents whether they are tribes or Tajic, Hazara, or Pahstuns, whatever they are, then they try to pass on their way of thinking to young peoples and that where we get a problem, ’cause then we are talking about future, and future generation and we don’t want it to be carried around for another decade, so ...
Challenging Afghan patriarchy

I observed how Nageba was respected when she presented her work for the Refugee Council of Australia. Nageba is an initiator of a forward-looking consensus. She tells of the horrors of ethnic conflict between the Hazara, Tajik, and Pashtun in Afghanistan in the hope of helping others learn from the past. Nageba ventures the proposition that young Afghan women entering the work force and the expanded activities of community organisations are the strongest challenge to classic patriarchy. After her “divorce”, Nageba demonstrated how Australian/Afghan men from Afghanistan view unveiled, educated, and employed women as a threat. These men have grown up maintaining the classic patriarchal practice of complete control over Afghan women (Moghadam, 1993, p. 126). Nageba represents the growing number of young Australian/Afghan women who are educated and employed; her situation also demonstrated to me how the threads of Afghan patriarchy cut across the world and this was of great concern to her. It was important for her to be able to optimise her own Australian tertiary education and proactively promote and support social justice programs.

Nageba’s story illustrates how gender inequality permeates the context of Afghan women’s early socialisation. However, the impact of re-location and the socio-economic transformation of young women like Nageba inevitably leads them to questioning the inherent assumptions behind the classic patriarchal practices in Afghanistan. Nageba, a progressive young woman, represents a generational shift that seeks to oppose arranged marriages prevalent in the Afghan diaspora within Australia. Nageba’s experience brings into focus the layers of oppression in relation to the theory of intersectionality; for example, even living in a multicultural society such as Australia, young Afghan women like Nageba are forced to conform in-order to be accepted. As a nation we speak about the benefits of being an immigrant over the disadvantage of living in exile. We, as Australians do not acknowledge the generational conflict within immigrant families. For instance, losing connection with all that is familiar, religion, customs and language means that family members’ roles change. Generational aspects can create conflict between children and parents and between spouses that shape the younger generation, particularly when language proficiency shifts the power.
balance to the children. Whilst the older generation try to uphold the old culture, this can give rise to conflict with the younger generation as they traverse their new culture. Nageba is an advocate of social reform; from a bi-cultural platform she promotes peace between the tribal adherents of Afghanistan and the Orientalist scenario of east and west. Her parents have encouraged her to pursue her education and career, but they also expect her to maintain their/her cultural traditions.

Nageba is a campaigner for how Muslim women can live a contemporary life in Australian society. Her narrative presents as the antithesis to the stereotypical Muslim Other and all it encompasses i.e. Afghan women as strong, intelligent, independent, contemporary, politically and socially aware ... as opposed to stereotypical media representations. Western dominant media rarely portray this when they speak of the Muslim Other particularly Muslim women.

The narrative by Nageba, provies an example of how policy overlooks the difficulties facing Muslims in Muslim minority diaspora communities. Further research needs to pay attention to the everyday experience of Australian Muslims rather than random modes of stereotyping through the lens of an Orientalist memory that permits additional forms of oppression.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined closely the diverse experience of three Afghan participants, Noor Ali, Reha and Nageba. Their narratives draw attention to the public and private lives of Afghan women. Many women like Noor Ali and Reha often lived under oppressive conditions, yet they made critical decisions for themselves and their families in the privacy of their homes. Nageba offers a generational view, she is able to use her unique expertise to work towards a more peaceful way of life for Afghan women in Australia as opposed to the feudalistic tribal disputes that are common in Afghanistan. Collectively their stories provide a frame of reference for us to bear in mind the multiple levels of social injustice and discrimination that have impacted on the lives of the participating Afghan women. Without knowing their lived reality there is no prism, other than the Orientalist memory, for us to understand the dilemmas they faced, and the difficult choices they had to make in often undesirable situations.
The following chapter, Chapter Eight, contains the oral histories of Parwin, and her friends Sara, and Maryam. Parwin, an educated Pashtu woman recounts her escape from the Taliban with a quirky sense of humour. Parwin, and her neighbour Sara, are Pashtu women from Kabul and Maryam is a Tajik woman from the Pahsir Valley, north of Kabul.
Chapter Eight: At home but not home
Chapter Eight: At home but not home

Introduction

Parwin, and her neighbour Sara, are Pashtu women from Kabul. Maryam is a Tajik woman from the Pahsjir Valley, north of Kabul. This chapter analyses their stories through the lens of intersectionality and a cross-cultural point of view.

Oscillating between relief, fear and guilt, Afghan women now living in Australia vacillate with being at home, yet not home. There was consensus within workshop participants that if they could be sure the Taliban were gone, they would go back to their home and ‘their culture’, although many Afghan women do not have a home to go back to because of the continuous conflict in their country (Sparrow, 2005). Conversations about going home seemed to stimulate the women’s memories from the past and evoked a sense of emotional kinship within the workshops. The participants’ stories demonstrates the poignant ties that are connected to the nostalgia of family relationships and the difficulty of leaving loved ones behind.

Parwin’s story: home but not at home.

Preamble

Parwin is Pashtun and has a small granddaughter. She is a tall woman and dresses in a fashionable Australian style; her dark hair is cut in a stylish bob at chin length. She is reticent and feels more comfortable with her Afghan friend Khadija close by. During the workshops, she explained that she was upset about her ninety-year-old father, who still lives in Kabul. She calls her father’s second wife ‘stepmother’ with fondness; her own mother died five years ago. Parwin speaks freely, but when I mentioned I would like to switch the audio-recorder on, she reacted, saying “No, no” and started to cry. There was a sense of fear behind Parwin’s reluctance to participate in audio-recorded interviews.

Parwin has an older brother in Australia, as well as her husband and two sons. Her friend Khadija gently comforted her and encouraged Parwin to tell her story; still she said, “No, no” and shook her
head persistently. As we were preparing to leave for the day and during a normal conversation, Parwin told how she went across the Afghan border into Pakistan on the back of a camel. ‘Oh,’ I said, ‘I would love to hear that story.’ She laughed and promised she would tell me the next week.

Throughout the following week, I contemplated Parwin’s situation. Each one of the Afghan women involved in my research project had horrendous stories. It therefore stood to reason that Parwin and other members of her family had been subjected to similar or worse circumstances during the Russian invasion and the mujahedeen conflict. I speculated about the role an elderly father might play in ensuring his family escaped the conflict in Afghanistan. What were the dangers he risked, could Parwin’s story still have the potential to do harm to her father and his family at home in Afghanistan? In telling her story, Parwin brings to light the planning and creativity her family employed to escape the violence of the Afghan/Russian Communist government known as the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA).

Telling a story about a camel ride seemed acceptable to Parwin. She perhaps felt it would not be too intrusive and I imagined telling an amusing tale would avoid sparking uninvited reminiscing that triggered grief-related anxiety. Although many Afghan women are fearful of venturing into a public forum or even expressing their own point of view Parwin was happy and comfortable revealing her story in bits and pieces in casual conversations over lunch or in banter when reminiscing with the other participants.

The following week, Parwin was more involved in our workshop. I prompted, “Last week, Parwin, when we were leaving, you told me that you went by camel to Pakistan. So, what were the circumstances that had you leave your home in Kabul?” I made sure she was aware that the audiotape was switched on and inquired, “Do you feel well enough to tell your story this week?” She nodded and nervously said **OK**. “What happened on the day you left?” I asked. “Had you planned to leave for some time? I know that the war was something that made people leave, but what made you decide that you were going to leave?” *Parwin’s voice is in Monotype bluefont.*
No. It was 20 days before that I say I leave my country. No, this time no rockets, it’s not too much fighting. Early in the morning the soldiers came and knocking on the door and looking in the house. The mujahedeen, looking for guns and things. “That would be frightening, were you scared?” No, I not scared much (laughter, pulling a brave face). “You were not scared?” No! No! (laughing) So my husband say me some time he (mujahedeen) kill me, we leave the country.

Parwin’s laughter lightened her anxiety; she was becoming more comfortable with her friend beside her. Her husband had studied in Germany to be a radio technician and was working in government communications when the Russians invaded Afghanistan.

This time, I live in capital city, this time what … mujahedeen just before the Taliban, um, my husband working he scared, sometime (the government) put in jail, my husband. Two of his work companions were shot at their work desk, and he was fearful that the mujahedeen would see him as a communist sympathiser and kill him too, so they prepared to leave Afghanistan after their home had been searched. No, the government, everything this time was no good, everybody. Yeah. This government is no good. They made plans to escape, selling as much as they could to friends and family, as they could not take anything with them. No nothing, no picture, no money. I took my cousins’ clothes and go to Pakistan; just me, because if the government catch people put us in jail or kill.

Reiterating to make sure there was no misunderstanding about the way I had interpreted her story I commented, ‘Oh, the Russian-controlled government did not want you to leave, if they catch you on the way out they put you in jail. So, you had to go quietly.’ Parwin explained almost in a whisper, I give this money. I paid the gypsy people to take me to some wedding, wedding party someone I don’t know live in the village close to Islamabad and I sit with this bride, close to bride (indicating sitting very close). I paid somebody like twenty thousand (Pakistan) rupees I can’t remember now. I give this money for this man the gypsy people.

Afghan gypsies are Bedouins; they live an unconventional way of life moving from place to place. Parwin’s family masqueraded as wedding guests, surrounded by the gypsy community as if they
were part of the wedding party so that government officials or the mujahedeen would not recognise them or the fact that were attempting to escape. *I cry all the way and after I go to this place it's like a … one o'clock in the morning and stayed there and we come four o'clock and we walked. I could not sleep, the wind something was very bad I was fever and very tired sometime walking sometimes sitting on camel. Two night I sleep … on the rocks.* Parwin shuddered, the hair on the backs of her arms stood up, she rubbed her arms, and spoke in Farsi to get the correct word for scorpions. She and the other Afghan women laughed loudly as she winced and said, *Scorpions and things. Thirty-one years I go away leave from my country.*

Khadija, Parwin’s friend, looked at her, concerned; she turned towards me and said, “*she need counselling, she is (like) my sister, I know her, she need counselling because she has lots of things here (indicates in her heart), she cry all the time. It’s good to cry one time and take it out.*”*The hidden assumptions of Parwin’s dialogue were guiding Khadija’s actions. As if she had said too much, Khadija cleverly changed the subject by saying, ‘I know you went on holidays (to Afghanistan).’* Parwin, laughing, replied, *I put the burqa on. I am Afghan woman.* (laughing) *I never put the burqa on my life.* Correcting her own English, she said, *I never wore the burqa in my life, I escaped from the Taliban* (still laughing).

Her laughter was disturbed by her private thoughts and her anxiety became visible: *I see the suicide bombers, (on the news) I straight away phone (home), no answer, I am very upset. Khadija asked her, “How do you know the Taliban? When you are in Afghanistan, how do you know which one is Taliban?”* Parwin answered seriously *Nobody know the Taliban.*

Khadija had left Afghanistan as a young child. Her extended family has remained in Pakistan. She was curious too, she wanted to know what happens when you go back home. She asked, *‘Parwin, when you go back to Afghanistan do they think you Australian woman or an Afghan woman?’* I was curious too about this question, and Parwin replied, *I went to my country, now I stay for two months I say I go home, my life like Australian now.*

‘At home but not home’ reveals issues embedded in Parwin’s history and the history of other Afghan women; the palimpsest of residue collectively and metaphorically carries forward to bring
into focus the interwoven and fragmented layers in the narrative of being a refugee and being at home but not home. In doing this research, I discovered another side to Afghan women that contests the stereotypical perception that many Australians have of the Muslim Other. Afghans have a grand sense of humour, sometimes laughing in the face of adversity. The Afghan humour shines throughout this chapter even though the women whose stories are at the heart of this research have brought to light imagery of family annihilation through years of tribal conflict and external occupation.

Lather and Smithies (1997) explain this as a coping strategy “by moving from inside to outside, across different levels and a multiplicity and complexity of layers that unfold an event which exceeds our frame of reference” (p. xvii). Shifting from inside her oral history to being outside of her traumatic experience, Parwin moved back and forth, from being attached to being detached when the experience was too much to bear. By weaving the humorous with the heart rendering, the laughter with the tears, the guilt with the fear and the chaos in Afghanistan, Parwin’s experience brings into focus the emotional intersections of trauma, death, and survival which manifest as fear and guilt of being home but not at home.

Tracy (2010) suggests it takes time in the field to notice a culture’s values. Noticing “who is talking and what they are talking about, but also who is not talking and what is not said” (p. 843) brings into focus the issues that might be embedded, believed, or part of the contributors’ common sense. The careful watching and documentation of this phenomenon as it happens is the key to connecting the palimpsest layers veiled between the unspoken and implicit meanings of the informant’s experience. Parwin’s laughter masks her emotions: she seems to use her humour as she moves through her experiences just like Reha, she laughs when she feels the fear, and her few words paint a big picture.

After 30 years of living in various parts of the world, Parwin’s brothers and sisters came together in celebration of their father’s ninetieth year. They met in Kabul and it was a happy occasion, yet overshadowed by the fear of the Taliban with random bombings a daily threat to the ordinary
families in Afghanistan. Nearly all Afghans have experienced losing family members or friends in warfare. The irony here is that ten years after the Americans occupied Afghanistan, Parwin, an Australian citizen, wore the blue burqa in 2011 for the first time in her life because of her fear of the Taliban, suicide bombers, and kidnappers.

Parwin made public how scared she was about going back home to Afghanistan, her experience of guilt at what is happening at home in Afghanistan, and the analogous fear while being absent from her Australian home while she was in Afghanistan. After two months in Afghanistan however she wanted to come back home to Australia; back to the Australian flow of life, employment, education, modern facilities, and freedom from fear of continuous conflict. She confessed her largely unarticulated understanding of cultural transitioning by wanting to come back home to Australia, mostly discernible in nods and silences, her friend realised she too was absorbing and integrating into the culture of Australia and Australian society.

In the following section, Sara’s story seems to be the antitheses of Parwin’s narrative about home away from home

**Sara’s story**
Sara expressed how war-torn Afghanistan was so terrible she has no desire to return. Her narrative focused on her husband’s family who abandoned her and her four young children in Pakistan. Her responses to my research enquiry seemed frozen in the fear and anxiety she felt when she was told to leave her husband’s family home in Pakistan. I felt Sara wanted to participate in the interviews but she hesitated twice before permitting me to audio-record her story.

**Preamble**
Sara has never worn a burqa or a veil. Her light brown hair has silver highlights; she wore an ankle-length skirt with black leather boots, and a smart long jacket to the workshop. She lives in the outer western suburbs of Sydney. She has raised her four children as a single mother and educated them in local public schools. Her married daughter has two young children and two of her sons work in
local stores. Together they have recently purchased the family home. She consulted with her sons seeking their permission before participating in this research. She appeared pre-occupied by what her sons might think of her participation and very nervous about her spoken English. Her audio-recorded interview was brief. Despite her thoroughly modern appearance, her narrated history brings into focus the classical patriarchal practice of seeking consent from the male members of her family. *Sara’s voice is in Monotype blue font.*

Sara’s contemporary facade betrayed her mujahedeen confrontation, until she offers her arms. On the inside of each forearm, from her elbow to her wrist, she discloses evidence of a physical bayonet attack. She explained in her halting English, *come to house the house of my husband had and shoot, shoot, shoot and my husband is dead.* They shot her husband in front of her children. She and her children were hysterical. Her husband had worked in the bank and she had been a teacher. Like many Afghans born in the latter half of the twentieth century, they grew up in the period of modernising when the Afghan leader’s concerns were to improve human and women’s rights issues. Education and health were fields of growth for young men and women. Suddenly, life as Sara had known it was interrupted by the Russian invasion.

After experiencing the death of her husband, Sara and the remaining members of her husband’s family fled to Pakistan. *The in-laws kicked ... me out after one year. They are very bad people the in-laws they always fight ... uh, they beat ... and um ... left the house, the in-law house and moved separate and then the husband cousin sponsor me and after seven years I coming here And Inshalla and ... I happy ... happy.* Anar was Sara’s friend, more like sisters they said. Anar signed a consent form but declined to be interviewed but intervened to elaborate on Sara’s past: “*Sara was living in Pakistan by herself like that with four children, yeah with the four children the life is very hard for her you have to work the children and the two sons is very little, one of them was eight, the other one was six— seven or six or something like that—the boys, the two boys they have to sell some elastic or some ...*” Sara continued *When ... my dad heard hers daughter was in very difficulties then ... they little bit of help.*

Sara’s story brings to light some key insights into the experiences of many Afghans during the Russian invasion and the mujahedeen regime. In a moment, Sara’s life went from good to
extraordinarily violent and escalated so that day-by-day her view of life was saturated by another significant incident. Sara’s family’s risked death to escape Afghanistan, her following rejection was arduous and dangerous; although she made light of it. Fortunately, Sara’s father sustained her existence in Pakistan with some financial support and her husband’s cousin, who lived in Australia, honoured his brother’s wife by facilitating her arrangements to migrate as a ‘Woman at Risk’ to Australia. He met her and her children at the airport in 2005, and Sara and her children stayed with him for two months and then moved into their own Department of Housing home.

The concept of intersectionality is often hard to grasp until we realise that, simultaneously, Sara was a wife, a mother, a daughter, a daughter-in-law, a sister, a niece, a cousin, an aunt, and a friend. Crenshaw (1991) encourages us to think about our community role in terms of the privilege or the oppression we experience in relation to those identifications. Intersectionality draws on feminist work to show how women are positioned across multiple contexts; it foregrounds complexity and combats societal depictions that often reduce women to just one category.

Sara’s story explicitly depicts the interwoven complexity of her positions; it also reflects a bricolage (Kinchelo, 2011), or patchwork of accounts. What follows aims to analyse the ways gender, culture, and motherhood are claimed/rejected, relevant/irrelevant, identified/dis-identified (Vallentine, 2007) and affect the life of Sara. As a single educated woman in Afghanistan, Sara enjoyed some independence as a teacher. Upon her marriage, she was positioned within the patriarchal home of her husband. Her status as a woman was only elevated at the birth of each of her sons. Losing her husband was a shock for Sara that began a rapid succession of previously unimagined events. After her husband’s death, she was a widow. Crammed into a small apartment in Pakistan, Sara, her children, and her husband’s family had to overcome extreme poverty, sharing money, clothing, and food. Sara was beaten and seen as a financial burden. She was then rejected. Normally disenfranchising a daughter-in-law and her children would not occur, because the children are deemed to belong to the patriarchal family and to abandon kin-folk is a disgrace in Afghan society. However, once she was rejected by the patriarchal family, she identified as a single woman, and was
socially condemned. To survive in Pakistan and for the first time in her life, with the help of her father, Sara was forced into a self-directed independence she was not used to or comfortable with.

Sara’s day-to-day social practices, where the men in the family dealt with the outside world, abruptly transformed. The breakdown of the extended family structure that served as a support system, economically and socially, was shattered. As Sara’s in-laws had rejected her she became marginalised, like many other women in Afghanistan who are caught at the intersection of cultural interests and implications of Western sovereignty in a complicated war. Her story portrays “the overlapping and mutually reinforcing oppressions that many women face” (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008, p. 5). Against this background “some of the more specific factors and forces that have fuelled the dynamics of the discourse on difference and inequality among women” are more evident (Knapp 2005, p. 249). Specifically, Sara’s story depicts patriarchal domination and gender stigmatisation interwoven with issues of dishonour and shame.

Maryam’s story
In the final vignette, Maryam’s narrative provides an interesting juxtaposition in the sense that she regards her story as ordinary because she did not personally experience gendered violence. She is a confident young woman who came to Australia as a ‘legal’ immigrant. This, it seemed to me, coupled with the fact that her husband’s large family were progressive Muslims and advocated women’s human rights, contributed to Maryam’s sense of ease and autonomy.

Preamble
Maryam exhibits poise and assurance and is independent in judgement and actions. Maryam, in her early-forties has two teenage daughters at high school. She was the youngest child of a large, progressive Muslim family and went to school in Afghanistan. Maryam is a Tajik woman married to an Uzbek man. Their marriage would have transcended the limits of traditional ethnic norms and rules in the Panjshir Valley. She had never worn hijab, she drove a car, and went shopping at the local shopping centre. Maryam, the last to narrate an audio-recorded interview, had observed over three workshops before she was comfortable with the audio-recorder. When she sat down, she
appeared matter-of-fact and needed little encouragement in narrating her story. The interview began with her marriage. *Maryam’s voice is in Monotype italic font.*

*When the mujahedeen came to Afghanistan, yeah, after one year of mujahedeen we went to Pakistan as a um … immigrant. Yeah, for safety. And at that time my brother-in-law was in Australia and he say come to Pakistan and we will help you we will send you money for you for renting house and spending your life … so we went to Pakistan, it was 1994. Yeah, then we stayed in Pakistan for eight years.*

Maryam’s brother-in-law lived in Australia and he advised them how to fill out the forms to come to Australia. *My brother in law was here, he says a lot about Australia’s good country there, um, good you know the government helps people here. And they, we passed three interviews to come to Australia … UN, Yes and after that they accept us they say which country do you want to go? We want to go to Australia.* With only her husband’s brother’s family in Australia, Maryam insists she and her husband are happy here. *Of course, I am happy here, he is happy but the problem is … no family, yeah, so I feel alone. My dad passed away six years ago and my mum passed away two years ago and I couldn’t see them, yeah I was the last child of my parents and they loved me a lot. When my dad was here, my dad he, he was making the decision but my husband is not like that.*

She laughed when asked if she had worn the burqa. *No scarf, I was wearing miniskirts, yeah. So after when mujahedeen came we had to wear the hijab and scarf yes for one year, after one year we left Afghanistan and Pakistan is the same as Afghanistan: long black scarf. Some people, Australian people ask me are you Muslim. I say yes. They say why don’t you wears head scarf. My husband like hijab, he wants me to wear yeah, it’s the symbol of Muslim you have to wear, but I say Ok I wear when I get old. It depends on every family, you know, some men think they are man they can do anything they want but it’s not … My husband is really, you know, open minded, he has an open mind, you know he has bankcard he doesn’t know the pin number (laughter). The bankcard is with me Yes (more giggles).*

Much of the literature by feminists on Afghan women, such as Hawthorn & Winter (2002), Abu-Lughod (2002), and Dreher & Ho (2009) are positioned to champion Afghan women in the wars on terror and in so doing often omit the modern and liberal families that embraced human and women’s rights. Popular media focuses on the strict patriarchal practices that marginalise countless
women, and manipulates the international intersections of cultural and political overlays to misappropriate the visual image of the veiled Afghan woman. Maryam embodies the modernist approach that was embraced by King Amanullah (1892–1960) only to be thwarted by Russian invasion and conflict with the mujahedeen. She and her husband have maintained a progressive point of view for their daughters in terms of religion, education, and human rights as Australian citizens.

Home but not home
To illustrate my point further and the sense of home that many Afghans have left behind, I will use the work of a celebrated Australian/Afghan artist, Abdul Karim Rahimi, and his small oil painting, *My Family*, 2002, just 23 x 28 cm (Fig. 39). The image is a visual way of highlighting the distinction of being at home but not home. Rahimi has depicted his family dressed in cultural Afghan costume, seated on a customary red Persian carpet scattered with the traditional Afghan large cushions. He has used his traditional miniature painting skills to achieve the delicate ornamental border, framed with a lacy geometrical pattern like the treasured fourteenth century Timurid Persian manuscripts and the cherished Shahnama (Book of Kings).

Figure 39. Abdul Karim Rahimi *My Family* 2002 (23 x 28 cm) Oil on handmade paper. Image courtesy of Elizabeth Ashburn
The standard Australian backyard fence is a jarring feature in this revealing picture, it provides a glimpse of living in exile within Australian suburbia. Said (2000) describes living in true exile as a condition of terminal loss, “Just beyond the frontier between ‘us’ and the ‘outsiders’ is the perilous territory of not-belonging: this is to where in a primitive time peoples were banished, and where in the modern era immense aggregates of humanity loiter as refugees and displaced persons” (p. 177). He even suggests that “exile is sometimes better than staying behind or not getting out: but only sometimes” (p. 178). Only two of the eight Afghan women interviewed have returned home after relocating to Australia. Clifford and Marcus (1986) recognise the difficulties that face women living in exile, claiming “the demands of family and work, and with the claims of old and new despite these hardships ... women may refuse the option of return when it presents itself, especially when the terms are dictated by men” (p. 314). Carol Stack articulates this dilemma: “For all of us in good times and bad, the image of home is multilayered and the notion of returning is unsettling” (cited in Constable, 1999, p. 203). This then raises the question, “How do I fit in when I go home?” (p. 205). Most telling is, “the ambivalence of not belonging, and the plural vision that might result from diasporic experiences” (p. 8) and articulates that relocation does not sever emotional ties with home but shapes and alters them, often in new and different ways.

Conclusion

This chapter has documented the diverse ways in which Afghan women describe their experiences. Parwin and Maha, whose oral history was discussed in Chapter Five are the only two participants in this research who have returned home to Afghanistan. Interestingly, they both expressed pleasure at returning home to Australia. This provides some understanding about how refugees and immigrants make a home away from home when their home is in disarray and they are in a different space to their parents and siblings, or even their children, and therefore live in exile. Throughout the complexities and layers of conflict and war, Parwin never lost the ability to understand that humour helped her to veil the pain of leaving home. But it was Sara’s narrative that elucidated the extreme violence towards women in Afghanistan by the mujahedeen who opposed communist involvement in the Afghan Government (see p. 85), and the intractable situation of war that in turn caused the breakdown of family values. A more autonomous approach is provided by Maryam who
compares her life in Australia with that of her elderly mother in Afghanistan. Her oral history is conveyed in a few paragraphs, her reasoning was that her story was not as interesting as the other women’s because she came as a ‘legal immigrant’ and her husband was a ‘liberated man’. Her main concern in Australia is to maintain the cultural aspects of family in the Afghan tradition. Maryam herself made the interesting observation about how refugees are defined in Australia as either ‘legal’ or ‘illegal’ immigrants. Her ‘liberated husband’ is an alternative concept that seems contrary to the research available about the patriarchal practices in Afghanistan that leaves no space for the progressive Muslim male. Maryam’s short dialogue casts a different light on these same issues and brings into focus how subjectivity and personal accounts of experience are historically and locally particularised.

In the following chapter, Chapter Nine: The Conclusion and Analysis I reiterate and reflect on the findings of my research.
Chapter Nine: Conclusion and analysis
Chapter Nine: Conclusion and Analysis

The Afghan women participating in this research came together as immigrants and refugees, they offered support and encouragement, and provided active assistance to each other; they implicitly understood what each other had in common and helped each other with day-to-day issues. They unquestioningly comprehended stress-related concerns associated with relocation and generational cultural matters. Their stories testify to the spirit and resilience of Afghan women and their sense of endonym, in other words, a longing for a place that engages with an emotional link to the language, customs, and culture they understand.

The stories told in this research in theory inform non-Muslim Australians about the culture and dynamics of the veiled Afghan woman with respect, honesty, and willingness on behalf of both researcher and researched. By including the women’s sometimes horrendous, sometimes humorous stories, there is an opportunity to create an alternative discourse that will change the dominant representation of the Muslim Other in contemporary Australia.

The questions I sought to address - What is the reality behind the visual representation of the veiled Afghan woman in the blue burqa, and how do Afghan women recount their experience of cultural and political warfare now that they reside in Australia?

e) What are the residual or after effects of war experienced by Afghan women?
f) What forced Afghan women to leave their home and family?
g) What difficulties do the participating Afghan women experience in Australia?
h) How does nineteenth century Orientalist image and the theory of Orientalism play into the anti-Muslim rhetoric of Australians?

For myself, I recognise that my research can be described, as an in-depth study into a small aspect of the field. My research is limited by practical realities such as the scope, methodological constraints, respect for the university ethical framework, and a definitive time frame involved in
conducting qualitative interviews and collecting data. I have found that parallels from the past have
opinionated the Orientalist memory, and regularly misrepresents the Muslim Other to public
censure in Australia’s contemporary society.

I argue that the historical understanding of Australians is informed by the Orientalists’ discourse
where the veiled woman is a remnant of nineteenth and twentieth century colonialism and the
White Australia Policy. Even though Afghanistan was never colonised, this outmoded sense of
East/West was heightened after 11th September 2001. Australian leaders supported the moral
implications of saving Afghan women without comprehending the reality of cultural and political
conflict they experienced.

I have emphasised Australia’s historical settlement that chronicles the marginalisation of the
Muslim Afghan cameleers. I have outlined how for these Muslim women patriarchy can reach
across time and across nations to have a powerful influence on shaping women’s gendered
subjectivity. I have unveiled a portrait of marginality and provided a theoretical framework in
which intersectionality research can be substantiated and I reasoned that Australians often
uncritically draw on the chronicle of past East/West Orientalist observation when confronted
with the heightened visibility of veiled Afghan women.

The honesty of the participating women’s stories highlights how Afghan women who lived
through extraordinary situations of conflict shared their oral histories of torment, sorrow, and
grief with dignity. Afghan women, who became known as the face of war, told their stories about
the real terror of war, and gave a voice to the woman whose face was veiled under the blue lattice
mask of a burqa. Eight women’s experiences of the continuing conflict span decades across the
interface of ethnolinguistic groups, Pashtun, Tajik, and Hazara; each traversing the pathway of
relocation in Australia.

This research is necessarily personal in places because I share many of the participants’
commonalities. Indeed, my perspective is not unbiased. As the researcher writing the data I am
conscious that a personal point of view is involved in co-crafting an individual perspective. I have identified some of the bias and prejudiced verbal oratory Afghan women have been subject to that extends to Australian-born Muslims by Australians.

When speaking about the difficulties of recruiting Afghan women it was suggested several times, it could well be a fact that I was an outsider, a white woman, yet at no time did I feel like ‘the white woman in the room’ throughout my workshops and data collection working closely with Afghan women. I found converts (the English word) or revert (a term that comes from the Muslim belief that all people are born with faith in God) to Islam more critical of outsider research. I learned to pirouette around those who pose an opposing point of view and accept their assumptions. I can only be responsible for my own bias derived from a personal epistemology of family diversity to understand and tell the stories of the veiled Afghan woman.

**Important findings and recommendations**

My findings, tempered with the data I have examined, describe the inflexible patriarchy practices in Afghanistan women were subjected to. Afghan women have been subjugated and subjectified in their country of origin, objectified as the face of war in Australia, and their veiled images commodified in Western culture as a product to be endorsed in the ‘wars on terror’.

In Australia, depictions of Afghan women were commodified and traded as a social construct to divert attention from political distortion. The word ‘veil’ graced the headlines of newspapers, articles, books, publications, and television programs simultaneously promoting the war on terror while denying complicity, as Afghan women and children struggled to survive the terror of war. To reiterate, the issues of commodification for Afghan women have been a long tradition for exchange of money or a bride price to uphold arranged marriages (see p. 185), Afghan women have been commodified as something of use, an object (see p. 109). To conclude, in Australia, Afghan women have been commodified to the debilitating generality of their ‘object’ status as a tool of war and, the face of terrorism (see p. 90).
This has transpired because the internal consistency of Orientalism and Orientalist visual imagery plays a role in shaping Western notions in relation to how we think about the Muslim Other. For example, the juxtaposition of contradictory concepts transpired when Australia supported the American Government in ‘saving Afghan women’ from Muslim oppression. This rhetorical paradox brought into contention the social and political magniloquence that relegated Afghan women seeking refuge as a threat to Australia’s national security. In other words when contrasted with an image of an Afghan woman in a burqa, text can sway people, manuscripts can either influence or interrogate the cause.

These findings challenge the dominant media depictions and wide perceptions about Islamic people in Australia. This is at the crux of the matter, and because research is a potential site for social and political transformation, these findings can perhaps counteract the perception that the Muslim Other is incompatible with the Australian way of life.

I have observed the unique strength Afghan women possess that can inspire others how to view life through a wider world-view. Yet the Muslim traditions of purdah, or veiling, in its many connotations is viewed by Australians as unacceptable and oppressive (see Chapter 4). It is such intolerance that impedes the life of Australian Muslim women who are frequently marginalised by their difference in a stereotypical way, embodying a colonialist attitude, an intention that maintains the existing state of affairs. Table 4, below presents a summary of the major research findings.

### Table 4. Overview and inductive data analysis

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Cultural and political conflict

Western incursion into Afghanistan intensified the mujahedeen/Taliban masculine regime
Torture and trauma complicating the emotional transitioning of Afghan women into Australia’s diverse society

Social environment

Afghan women narrate their oral histories from the social setting in which they interacted
Australia’s dominant society challenges the incompatibility of Islamic values

Social phenomena

Visual images of Afghan women were Subjectified, Objectified and Commodified as an object to be bought and sold
Symbolic veiling justified the ‘war on terror’

My research provides important narratives from Afghan women and their experience of warfare in Afghanistan. As counter narratives, their stories challenge how Afghan women are seen germane to cultural ethos, education, and progress. When the participating women’s narratives were analysed, interpreted, and presented through the reflexive processes, additional information about Afghan women came to light. Throughout all the restrictions that evoked fear, panic, and emotional anxiety for Afghan women, it was Noor Ali and Reha’s stories that illuminated the strategies many Afghan women secretly put in place to manipulate the harsh rules imposed upon them. When cultural and political conflict overlapped to segregate and isolate women, the women themselves developed associations that they could trust and rely on.

Some of the women interviewed in this research minimised their experience during the years of the Cold War 1979–1989, because in Afghanistan they learned to navigate the classic patriarchal practices. However, the mujahedeen and Taliban control were brutal regimes practicing a cruel brand of misogyny. The Afghan women’s stories are interwoven with emotion for what they have lost. Time-honoured traditions have served Afghan women in the past and the extended family usually provided all the women’s requirements. Parwin speaks with love about her father’s second
wife, demonstrating there is often profound respect for the matriarch who maintains family, power and hierarchy. As a guest in the home of Mr Omarzad in Kabul, Afghanistan, I was treated with the utmost respect and spent many hours with his wife and small daughter. I observed that those who view the life of Afghan women through the lens of difference or the lens of retaliation fail to see the significance of the role of Afghan women.

The current conflict spills over into contemporary Australia where Afghan women are frequently demonised within the broad-brush strokes of the Muslim Other and defined by their dress code. The war on terror has captivated Western attention and Afghan patriarchal culture was embellished to the extent that Afghan women had to be saved. Yet, perplexingly, the word ‘terrorist’ has been increasingly used ambiguously and directed at veiled Muslim women.

The findings of this research mean that I can cast a critical eye to the way interlocking systems of inequality are largely overlooked when patriarchy, gender, and religion interconnect viewed from an Orientalist memory. Often, the ways these issues affect migrant women in Australia are treated as single issues, and therefore maintain the unequal distribution of power and privilege in Australian society. Life for illiterate refugee women who are widowed is extremely lonely in Australia where they brave the stigma of anti-Muslim public rhetoric. To emphasise, Sara and her young sons could find menial work in Pakistan because the language is similar, but here in Australia, Afghan women are marginalised because of language inefficiency. What they have lost is their livelihood, their companionship, their extended family, something that they relied heavily on from other female family members in the Afghan household compound. Afghan women seeking sanctuary from war-torn Afghanistan have been frequently treated with suspicion and denied women’s human rights as the bearers of Muslim culture and Islamic values. This is the culmination of the Orientalist memory that sees Muslims as undesirable in Australian contemporary society and the status quo that maintains the chasm between the East and West, Muslims and Christians.

**Long terms effects unknown**

There would be limits to applicability if long term effects of the participating Afghan women had not been analysed. The women showed improvements in self confidence after the workshops,
however no definite long term follow up measures have been taken. The consequence, or effects of having conducted this study have also influenced my personal experience of the theme of war in Afghanistan and the theme of Muslim people in Australia.

The oral histories of Nasifah, Reha, Maha, Noor Ali, Parwin, Sara, Nageba and Maryam articulated the emotional and psychological scars of political conflict. Their stories are tangible accounts of fear, terror, and torture that argue the Anglocentric perception of terrorism and anti-Muslim rhetoric in Australia. The women’s stories generate a new image of the intractable and callous lasting acts of war and bring to light aspects that have previously gone unheeded: random bomb attacks that destroyed villages and civilians; deaths that are not accounted for; the obliteration of infrastructure and traditional Afghan society. These stories have also told of survival and unanticipated women’s bravery in the aftermath of cultural and societal destruction at the intersections of race, class, and inequality, demonstrating the array of barriers that have disempowered Afghan women.

**Reality, resilience and strength of Afghan women**

Each of the women’s oral histories demonstrates incredible levels of resilience and strength. The future of Afghan women is still at stake. Therefore, it is right and just to acknowledge the progress that the Afghan Muslim women who participated in this research have made in Australia. Their experience of patriarchy and gender inequality in a complex war challenges the patriarchal rhetoric that dominates the visual representations of Afghan women in contemporary Australian society, as the subjugated and oppressed Other.

Women like Nasifah, Reha, Maha, Noor Ali, Parwin, Sara, Maryam and Nageba are active members of Australian society. They are at various stages of learning English and are to some degree financially independent. Over time, they have developed and nurtured a strong network of Afghan women in their local diaspora and strive to educate their children as good Muslims and upstanding Australian citizens.
Where might the research go next?

I expect these findings to contribute to Australia’s multicultural contemporary society by adding a rich source of diverse knowledge. Nasifah, Maha and Nageba are active in Australian refugee communities. Each in their own way, participate to bridging the gap between cultures. By contributing to this research, the women’s oral histories inform Australians of an alternative account of the war in Afghanistan. I anticipate this research and the methodology would be applicable to the situation occurring in Syria and Iraq where women and children bear the brunt of extended warfare. This research can be adapted to other disciplines and discourses of social science such as social action, social justice, and the criminalisation of the Other as well as aspects of identity such as racial, religious, and ethnic difference in education and health as well as policy makers.

The dissemination of the results of my research transpire as an ongoing process throughout my candidature. During this time, I have worked on a volunteer basis with a NGO based in Sydney. More recently I have mentored three Afghan women in Wollongong sponsored by Strategic Community Assistance to Refugee Families (SCARF), Illawarra Multicultural Services (IMS), and the Illawarra Muslim Women’s Association. I have observed that organisations such as SCARF and IMS attract a generous amount of financial support from government and private agencies to support refugees. Yet the Illawarra Muslim Women’s Association, which is run by Muslim women for Muslim women refugees, struggles for recognition within the community.

My thesis highlights the need for further research in Australia that will deliver services to protect and foster a culture of inclusion for women rather than further marginalise them because of their cultural background, their dress codes, or their lack of English comprehension. Further research in this area is needed to facilitate positive social change and the relationship Australians have with Australian Muslims. This research could also be extended to include the children of Afghan women and the generational issues that challenge them concerning patriarchal propriety and ethnic obedience from Afghan elders while bridging two ethnic groups and two nations.
Attachments

Working document

Research questionnaire; open ended questions for Afghan women in Australia

October 2011.

What was your experience of conflict that caused you to leave Afghanistan?

Tell me what you miss about Afghanistan?

Are you a married woman?

At what age, did you get married?

Were you married in Afghanistan? Tell me about your wedding day?

What skills did you learn as a child at home in Afghanistan, i.e. embroidery, carpet making, needlework, cooking etc? Tell me about your life then.

What was your first impression of Australia?

What was your first impression of Australians?

How do you negotiate between cultures in Australia?

How do you maintain your own cultural integrity within Australia’s anti-Muslim society?

What is it like to be a Muslim woman in Australia?

What power shifts occur in the public and private spheres of your life in Australia?

What generational issues are you confronted with in your immediate family?

How do you negotiate difference in the work place and in your new community?

How do you create new social networks?

As immigrants or refugees how do you cope loneliness and social interaction?

How do you organize your life in Australia,

What meaning does the Afghan woman attach to her new way of life, and how does this in turn influence her actions?
Invitation to participate

Afghan women in Australia

Invitation to Participate in:

An arts-n-crafts project that promotes Afghanistan’s rich and vibrant artistic culture

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Mrs Annette Tzavaras PhD Candidate Centre for Educational Research, Diversities, Ethics and Education Research Group University of Western Sydney.

What: The study invites you to participate in art workshops and group discussions that will engage with Afghanistan’s traditional art activities that call to mind memories about particular events, people, places and occasions and integrate these reflections into an original art form.

Who: Afghan women who have conversational English.

Why: To investigate stories of Afghan women and how you negotiate cultural difference in Australian society and how you maintain your own cultural integrity.

When: To begin November 2011. You will be given written information about the nature and purpose of the project and interviews beforehand and you will be asked to give informed consent. You are able to withdraw from the research/interview at any stage.

How: I am available to speak at any meetings to further explain the rationale of the research project with the intention of recruiting participants.

For further details Contact:
Mrs. Annette Tzavaras
Mobile 0415979811
Email a.tzavaras@uws.edu.au

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee.
The Approval number is UWS06/14
Participants information sheet

Participant Information Sheet (General)

An information sheet, which is tailored in format and language appropriate for the category of participant - adult, child, young adult, should be developed.

Note: if not all of the text in the row is visible please 'click your cursor' anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section 'hover your cursor' over the bold text. Further instructions are on the last page of this form.

Project Title: Afghan Women in Australia

Who is carrying out the study?

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Mrs. Annette Tzavaras PhD Candidate. Centre for Educational Research, Diversities, Ethics and Educational Research Group, University of Western Sydney. The research will form the basis for the degree of PhD at the University of Western Sydney under the supervision of Prof, Moira Camody and Dr. Peter Bansel.

What is the study about?
I am interested in how Afghan women in Australia negotiate transitions within and between cultures.

The arts-based research aims to promote Afghanistan’s rich and vibrant arts and crafts, activities such as calligraphy, miniature painting, textile design, hand embroidery and carpet weaving. The research will engage with Afghan women and Afghanistan’s traditional art activities that call to mind memories about particular events, people, places and occasions and integrate these reflections into an art form that addresses the research question and the lived experience of difference.

What does the study involve?
The research will involve group discussions and participation in 3 art-based workshops, each of 2 to 3 hours duration. We will use art to trigger one-on-one interviews that, with your permission, will be audio- recorded. The workshops have been designed to establish rapport with you and other Afghan women to create a comfortable and safe environment. Afghan artefacts will be used to explore your experience of cultural differences. The aim is to provide you with a rich portfolio of ideas as well as demonstrate art techniques and present an overview of artistic options and methods that will allow you to communicate your unique life experience.

How much time will the study take?
You will be invited to attend 3 group workshops (each between 2 and 3 hours) and a combined total of between 6 and 9 hours to develop your own art work. You will be free to work at your own pace, to devote as much or as little time as you choose. You can also choose to include your art work in an exhibition of the group's work.

Will the study benefit me?
The study will benefit you and other Afghan women through an exciting artistic cultural exchange. Artistic
Participant consent form

Participant Consent Form

This is a project specific consent form. It restricts the use of the data collected to the named project by the named investigators.

Note: If not all of the text in the row is visible please 'click your cursor' anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section 'hover your cursor' over the bold text.

Project Title: Afghan Women in Australia

I, .................................., consent to participate in the research project titled Afghan Women in Australia

I acknowledge that:

I have read the participant information sheet and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to participating in 3 art based workshops that will involve art activities, making original art work, group discussions and audio-taped interviews.

I understand that my involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published but no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher/s now or in the future.

Signed:  

Name:  

Date:  

Return Address:  

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee.  
The Approval number is:  

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanresearch@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
National Ethics Application Form
Version 2008 - V2.0

Proposal title: Afghan Women in Australia

For submission to: University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00314)

Name: Prof Moira Carmody

Address: The Centre for Educational Research
Diversities, Ethics and Education Research Group
University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797
Penrith NSW 2751
Australia

Contact: (Bus) 02 97726328
(AH) -
(Mob) -
(Fax) -

Proposal status: Incomplete

Proposal description:

My doctoral research explores the historical and political interruptions and contemporary perceptions of Afghan women in Australia in the twenty first century. This research explores how Afghan women negotiate the transitions of cultural difference and what it means to be a Muslim woman in contemporary Australia. Their lives have been shaped by occupation, invasion, and oppression, their stories often beyond words. I want to understand the experiences of the Afghan women, as wives, a mothers, daughters, or widows; how does she maintain her own cultural integrity as she deliberates issues of gender in the private and public spheres of life in Australia? As an arts practitioner I will use ethnographical and visual qualitative methodologies from a poststructural perspective to examine this phenomenon. My research will focus on women located from three different historical positions; women who left Afghanistan before, during and after the Taliban regime, as well as, the personal challenges and power shifts women from each historical period were confronted with as immigrants or refugees. Through visual detail and context this methodology offers a holistic picture emphasizing the significance of historical positioning.

Previously submitted to:
University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00314)
Administrative Section

1. TITLE AND SUMMARY OF PROJECT

1.1. Title

1.1.1 What is the formal title of this research proposal?
Afghan Women in Australia

1.1.2 What is the short title / acronym of this research proposal (if applicable)?
Afghan Women in Australia

1.2. Description of the project in plain language

1.2.1 Give a concise and simple description (not more than 400 words), in plain language, of the aims of this project, the proposal research design and the methods to be used to achieve those aims.

My doctoral research explores the historical and political interruptions and contemporary perceptions of Afghan women in Australia in the twenty-first century. This research explores how Afghan women negotiate the transitions of cultural difference and what it means to be a Muslim woman in contemporary Australia. Their lives have been shaped by occupation, invasion, and oppression, their stories often beyond words. I want to understand the experiences of the Afghan women, as wives, mothers, daughters, or widows; how does she maintain her own cultural integrity as she deliberates issues of gender in the private and public spheres of life in Australia? As an arts practitioner I will use ethnographical and visual qualitative methodologies from a post/structural perspective to examine this phenomenon. My research will focus on women located from three different historical positions: women who left Afghanistan before, during and after the Taliban regime, as well as, the personal challenges and power shifts women from each historical period were confronted with as immigrants or refugees. Through visual detail and context this methodology offers a holistic picture emphasizing the significance of historical positioning.
2. RESEARCHERS / INVESTIGATORS

2.2. Principal researcher(s) / investigator(s)

2.2.0 How many principal researchers / investigators are there?  

1

2.2.1. Principal researcher / investigator 1

2.2.1. Name and contact details

Name: Mrs Annette Tzavaras

Address: The Centre for Educational Research
University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797
Penrith NSW 2751
Australia

Organisation: CER

Area: College of Arts

Position: PhD candidate

Contact (Bus) 0410479811 (AH)  
(Mob) 0410479811 (Fax) 0297735573

Email: 13547178@student.uws.edu.au

2.2.2... Summary of qualifications and relevant expertise NS 4.8.7 NS 4.8.15
BVA, University of Sydney
BCA Honours University of Wollongong
BCA Master by Research University of Wollongong

2.2.2... Please declare any general competing interests
No competing interests.

2.2.2... Name the site(s) for which this principal researcher / investigator is responsible.
Community Centres in Sydney New South Wales, and Victoria

2.2.3 Describe the role of the principal researcher / investigator in this project.
The principal researcher will be responsible for supervising, monitoring and ensuring the ethical collection, analysis and management of data.

2.2.4 Is the principal researcher / investigator a student?  

Yes

2.2.4...What is the educational organisation, faculty and degree course of the student?

Organisation: Diversities, Ethics and Education Research Group in CER
Faculty: College of the Arts
Degree course: PhD

2.2.4... Is this research project part of the assessment of the student?  

Yes

2.2.4... Is the student's involvement in this project elective or compulsory?  

Compulsory

2.2.4... What training or experience does the student have in the relevant research methodology?
My supervisors have instructed me in the practice of conducting and analysing narrative interviews and the preparation of observational and field note research. I will also be attending an ACSPRI course in Melbourne in the next few months.

2.2.4... What training has the student received in the ethics of research?
I have discussed the ethics of research with my supervisors and am aware of the ethical principles and practices relevant to my research.

2.2.4... Describe the supervision to be provided to the student. NS 4.8.8
My supervisors, Prof. Moira Carmody and Dr. Peter Bansel have briefed me in this matter, I will be maintaining contact via email during data collection and have face to face supervision during data analysis, publication and dissemination.

2.2.4... How many supervisors does the student have?  

2

2.2.4...Supervisor 1

Commercial-in-Confidence
2.2.4...Provide the name, qualifications, and expertise, relevant to this research, of the students’ supervisor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Prof</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Name</td>
<td>Moira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surname</td>
<td>Carmody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of qualifications and relevant expertise</td>
<td>Prof. Carmody is recognised as a national expert on sexual assault prevention education and gender and sexuality research. Her leadership in research is complemented by her distinguished service to the community through high level policy advice to federal and state governments, extensive national partnerships and as a high profile public and academic speaker and media commentator. She is a ARC grant assessor (appointed 2010) and in high demand as an examiner of doctoral, masters and bachelor honours theses from universities across Australian and from a range of disciplines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.4...Supervisor 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Dr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Name</td>
<td>Peter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surname</td>
<td>Bansel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of qualifications and relevant expertise</td>
<td>Dr. Peter Bansel was awarded his B.Ed (TCAE) in 1981 M.Ed (UTAS) in 1997 and PhD (UWS) in 2009. Prior to joining CER as a Research Fellow (2009) he was employed in the School of Psychology and Education at UWS and the Faculties of Education at UNSW and UTAS. In addition to Dr Bansel's experience as a Lecturer and researcher he has extensive experience with schools K-12 as a classroom teacher, curriculum writer and consultant. He is an experienced qualitative researcher with particular experience in narrative and life history.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3. Associate researcher(s) / investigator(s)

2.3.1 How many known associate researchers are there? (You will be asked to give contact details for these associate researchers / investigators at question 2.3.1.1)

0

2.3.2 Do you intend to employ other associate researchers / investigators? No

2.4. Contact

Provide the following information for the person making this application to the HREC.

2.4.1. Name and contact details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Prof Moira Carmody</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td>The Centre for Educational Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diversities, Ethics and Education Research Group</td>
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<td></td>
<td>University of Western Sydney</td>
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<td>Locked Bag 1797</td>
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<td>Penrith NSW 2751</td>
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<td>Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organisation:</td>
<td>CER</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area:</td>
<td>College of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position:</td>
<td>Professor / Group Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact:</td>
<td>(Bus) 02 97726328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(AH) -</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Mob) -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Fax) -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:M.Carmody@uws.edu.au">M.Carmody@uws.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.5. Other personnel relevant to the research project

2.5.1 How many known other people will play a specified role in the conduct of this research project? 0

2.5.2 Is it intended that other people, not yet known, will play a specified role in the conduct of this research project? No

2.6. Certification of researchers / investigators

2.6.1 Are there any relevant certification, accreditation or credentialing requirements relevant to the conduct of this research? No

2.7. Training of researchers / investigators

2.7.1 Do the researchers / investigators or others involved in any aspect of this research project require any additional training in order to undertake this research? No
3. RESOURCES

3.1. Project Funding / Support

3.1.1. Indicate how the project will be funded

3.1.1... Type of funding.

[Please note that all fields in any selected funding detail column (with the exception of the code) will need to be completed.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Grant / Sponsor</th>
<th>By Researchers Department or Organisation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of funding</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code (optional)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmed / Sought</td>
<td>Not Sought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail in kind support</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicate the extent to which the scope of this N/A HREC application and grant are aligned

3.1.1... How will you manage a funding shortfall (if any)?

Not/Applicable

3.1.2 Will the project be supported in other ways eg. in-kind support/equipment by an external party eg. sponsor

No

3.2. Duality of Interest

3.2.1 Describe any commercialisation or intellectual property implications of the funding/support arrangement.

Not/Applicable

3.2.2 Does the funding/support provider(s) have a financial interest in the outcome of the research?

No

3.2.3 Does any member of the research team have any affiliation with the provider(s) of funding/support, or a financial interest in the outcome of the research?

No

3.2.4 Does any other individual or organisation have an interest in the outcome of this research

No

3.2.5 Are there any restrictions on the publication of results from this research?

No
4. PRIOR REVIEWS

4.1. Ethical review

4.1.0. Duration and location

4.1.0. In how many Australian sites, or site types, will the research be conducted? 2
4.1.0. In how many overseas sites, or site types, will the research be conducted? 0

Provide the following information for each site or site type (Australian and overseas, if applicable) at which the research is to be conducted

4.1.0...Site / Site Type 1
4.1.0... Site / Site Type Name
Local Community Organisations or equivalent agencies in New South Wales
4.1.0... Site / Site Type Location
Local Community Organisations or equivalent agencies in New South Wales will be site Type 1. The site of artistic collaboration and interaction with local Afghan women, as well as the site for selecting, and conducting participant interviews.

4.1.0...Site / Site Type 2
4.1.0... Site / Site Type Name
Local Community Organisations or equivalent agencies in Victoria
4.1.0... Site / Site Type Location
Local Community Organisations or equivalent agencies in Victoria will be site Type 2. I will spend time interacting with an older and more established Afghan community in order to identify possible and appropriate women candidates for the interview process and following artistic collaboration.

4.1.0...Provide the start and finish dates for the whole of the study including data analysis
Anticipated start date 29/09/2011
Anticipated finish date 29/08/2013
4.1.0... Are there any time-critical aspects of the research project of which an HREC should be aware?
No

4.1.1 To how many Australian HRECs (representing site organisations or the researcher’s / investigator’s organisation) is it intended that this research proposal be submitted?
1

4.1.1...HREC 1
4.1.1... Name of HREC University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00314)

4.1.1...Provide the start and finish dates for the research for which this HREC is providing ethical review.
Anticipated start date or date range 29/08/2011
Anticipated finish date or date range 29/08/2013
4.1.1... For how many sites at which the research is to be conducted will this HREC provide ethical review?
2

4.1.1...Site 1
4.1.1... Name of site Local Community Organisations or equivalent agencies in New South Wales
4.1.1... Which of the researchers / investigators involved in this project will conduct the research at this site?
Principal Researcher(s)
Mrs Annette Tzavaras

4.1.1...Site 2
4.1.1... Name of site Local Community Organisations or equivalent agencies in New South Wales
4.1.1... Which of the researchers / investigators involved in this project will conduct the research at this site?
Principal Researcher(s)  
Mrs Annette Tzavaras

Associate Researcher(s)  

4.1.2 Have you previously submitted an application, whether in NEAF of otherwise, for ethical review of this research project to any other HRECs?  
Yes

4.1.2... To how many other HRECs have you submitted a proposal relating to this research project?  
1

4.1.2... HREC 1

4.1.2... Name of HREC  
University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00314)

4.1.2... Status of this review  
Submitted

4.1.2... Explain why an application for ethical review was submitted to the HREC/s identified in answer to question 4.1.2.1, eg. it may be for another phase of the research project which has very different characteristics. Describe the wider project context, where appropriate.

My original application was titled Catharsis, Tragedy and Restoration in Afghanistan, it was my intention to research ‘the veiled woman’ of Afghanistan and the residue of cultural conflict through collaborative art initiatives and a field trip to Afghanistan. At the time of my application the government issued a ‘No travel Warning’ to Afghanistan. I was advised to re-think and modify my research project to the Afghan Muslim Diaspora in Australia. The work undertaken to date remains pertinent to the revised project but the empirical work will now be conducted in Australia and the methodology has changed.

4.3. Peer review

4.3.1 Has the research proposal, including design, methodology and evaluation undergone, or will it undergo, a peer review process?  
Yes

4.3.1... Provide details of the review and the outcome. A copy of the letter / notification, where available, should be attached to this application.

My research proposal has been reviewed by the Confirmation of Candidature Committee and my amended research proposal has been reviewed by my supervisors Prof. M Carmody and Dr. Peter Bansel, and Prof M Atherton (Associate Dean Research)
Ethical Review Section

Summary

Applicant / Principal Researcher(s)

Prof Moira Carmody
Professor / Group Leader, College of Arts

Mrs Annette Tzavaras
BVA, University of Sydney
BCA Honours University of Wollongong
BCA Master by Research University of Wollong

Potential conflicts of interest
No competing interests.

Other Relevant Personnel

Prof Moira Carmody
Prof. Carmody is recognised as a national expert on sexual assault prevention education and gender and sexuality research. Her leadership in research is complemented by her distinguished service to the community through high level policy advice to federal and state governments, extensive national partnerships and as a high profile public and academic speaker and media commentator. She is a ARC grant assessor (appointed 2010) and in high demand as an examiner of doctoral, masters and bachelor honours theses from universities across Australian and from a range of disciplines.

Dr Peter Bansel
Dr. Peter Bansel was awarded his B.Ed (TCAE) in 1981 M.Ed (UTAS) in 1997 and PhD (UWS) in 2009. Prior to joining CER as a Research Fellow (2009) he was employed in the School of Psychology and Education at UWS and the Faculties of Education at UNSW and UTAS. In addition to Dr Bansel's experience as a Lecturer and researcher he has extensive experience with schools K-12 as a classroom teacher, curriculum writer and consultant. He is an experienced qualitative researcher with particular experience in narrative and life history.
5. PROJECT

5.1. Type of Research
5.1.1 Tick as many of the following ‘types of research’ as apply to this project. Your answers will assist HRECs in considering your proposal. A tick in some of these boxes will generate additional questions relevant to your proposal (mainly because the National Statement requires additional ethical matters to be considered), which will appear in Section 9 of NEAF.

This project involves:
[X] Research using qualitative methods  NS 3.1

5.1.2 Does the research involve limited disclosure to participants? NS 2.3 No
5.1.3 Are the applicants asking the HREC / review body to waive the requirement of consent? NS 2.3.5 No

5.2. Research plan
5.2.1 Describe the theoretical, empirical and/or conceptual basis, and background evidence, for the research proposal, eg. previous studies, anecdotal evidence, review of literature, prior observation, laboratory or animal studies (4000 character limit). NS 1.1

September 11th 2001 came as a shock to the whole world. Fear and distrust fragmented relationships between East and West across the world, difference became a visible phenomenon, and lines of demarcation were drawn. In accordance with these observations and the historical relationships between Christians and Muslims (Lewis 1996; Spivak 1996; Ahmed 2003; Hawthorne and Winter 2003) the veiled woman once again become spoken about rather than spoken with. I was curious as to how the Afghan woman behind the veil, without consultation, became a worldwide symbol of Islamic domination and conflict, how her image came to represent the underlying concept of terrorism. I experienced firsthand, cultural prejudice and bias directed at Australian Muslims like my daughter's family and my extended family. Neo-Orientalism and politicization of the veiled Afghan woman; yet again, allowed the western world to ignore the plight of the disempowered and the disenfranchised Afghan woman.

In this context, sovereignty positioned within the historica1 nineteenth century colonialist sensibilities and visual imagery of the Orientalist painters, highlights the intersections and junctures of such political paradigms. By juxtaposing cultural and social histories we can comprehend the lingering anxieties Australians have of difference that reaches across generations through trans-national and trans-cultural narratives.

My Doctoral research aims to explore such trans-national and trans-cultural interruptions in collaboration with Afghan women in Australia. The purpose of this collaboration is to converse directly with the Afghan woman in order to comprehend how she negotiates the shift within and between different cultures, so we might better understand her world and what it means to be a Muslim woman in contemporary Australia. How does she cope with the politics of difference in the work place? How does she traverse her local neighborhood community? How does she negotiate dress codes while maintaining her cultural integrity? My research design offers an opportunity to investigate the circumstances that contributed to Afghan women leaving their homes and families in Afghanistan. Their stories have yet to be heard. This research will be a benchmark study that contributes to the conceptual understanding and documentation of the contemporary Afghan woman in Australia.

5.2.2 State the aims of the research and the research question and/or hypotheses, where appropriate.

How does the Afghan woman in Australia negotiate transitions within and between cultures?

The aim of this research is to examine how the Afghan woman in Australia navigates and finds her way through the interruptions and transformations associated with immigration and refugee-ism. What is her experience of difference, what has she lost, what has she gained? How does she traverse between diverse cultures in the to and fro of daily life, in her neighbourhood, across generations and within her Muslim community, how does she negotiate dress codes in the work place, how does she deliberate issues of gender in the private and public spheres of life in Australia? What is her experience as a wife, a mother, a daughter, a widow?

My research design involves art based workshops to examine the notions of lived experience and visual discovery. The art based workshops will facilitate technical proficiency (how to do art) and sensitivity (about subject matter). By dealing with Afghan women directly and engaging with Afghanistan's traditional artifacts that call to mind memories about places, people and occasions, these reflections can then be integrated into an art form that addresses the research question and the lived experience of cultural difference in Australia.

More specifically this project aims to:

- Comprehend the notion of historical and post-colonial patterns that led to the negative stereotyping of the Afghan woman by juxtaposing appropriate historical accounts of transnational and trans-cultural narratives
- Make a significant contribution to the conceptual understanding and documentation of the contribution the Afghan woman has made to Australian society

Commercial-in-Confidence
5.2.3 Has this project been undertaken previously? No

5.3. Benefits/Risks

5.3.0 Does the research involve a practice or intervention which is an alternative to a standard practice or intervention? No

5.3.2 What expected benefits (if any) will this research have for the wider community? This research will encourage collaboration through cross-cultural art initiatives by working directly with Afghan women in Australia. The project will foreground the voice of the contemporary Afghan woman, facilitated by interactive art activities in order to capture the hard to express experiences, and other aspects of the participating Afghan woman's knowledge that might otherwise remain hidden. This knowledge will benefit all Australians by increasing the understanding of the wider community of the complex and diverse Afghan woman's diverse experience.

5.3.3 What expected benefits (if any) will this research have for participants? Women from the Afghan Diaspora will, for the first time have an opportunity to engage in transcultural and transnational visual narratives, to tell their story from the space of the stereotyped Afghan woman previously addressed only as the Orientalised other. One of the benefits of offering projective and visual assignments is to acknowledge unexpected views and interpretations that generate a more holistic view of the women's lives. Artistic activities benefit participants who share their knowledge resulting in increased self confidence, creativity and imagination, skills that enrich the lives of the participants and the lives of others around them by allowing them to verbalise their collective experiences. Art related activities make the ordinary seem extraordinary by asking us to consider new ways of seeing or doing things, this makes art based research a powerful weapon for breaking through our everyday perceptions.

5.3.4 Are there any risks to participants as a result of participation in this research project? Yes

5.3.5 Explain how the likely benefit of the research justifies the risks of harm or discomfort to participants.

Potential negligible risk is that of discomfort or distress arising from the recounting of life-experience in the narrative interviews. However participants will have been briefed about the nature and purpose of the interviews, given informed consent, and assured that they can withdraw from the research/interview at any stage. The research aims to give voice to the women's experience in order to bridge the gap between stereotypes of Afghan women and their lived reality, it is therefore necessary to work with this population. Furthermore, the research and the narrative interviews will be approached indirectly through art activities/workshops as a way of creating a more comfortable and safe context for the participants. All participants will be presented with a list of support services if issues arise for them. The participants will be informed that they can chose to withdraw at any time.

5.3.8 Are there any other risks involved in this research? eg. to the research team, the organisation, others No

5.3.9 Is it anticipated that the research will lead to commercial benefit for the investigator(s) and or the research sponsor(s)? No

5.3.11 Is there a risk that the dissemination of results could cause harm of any kind to individual participants - whether their physical, psychological, spiritual, emotional, social or financial well-being, or to their employability or professional relationships - or to their communities? No

5.4. Monitoring
Refer to NS 3.3.19 - 3.3.25

5.4.1 What mechanisms do the researchers / investigators intend to implement to monitor the conduct and progress of the research project? My supervisors, Professor Moira Carmody and Dr. Peter Bansel will monitor all aspects of the conduct of research through weekly/fortnightly supervision sessions.
6. PARTICIPANTS

6.1. Research participants

6.1.1 The National Statement identifies the need to pay additional attention to ethical issues associated with research involving certain specific populations.

This question aims to assist you and the HREC to identify and address ethical issues that are likely to arise in your research, if its design will include one or more of these populations. Further, the National Statement recognizes the cultural diversity of Australia’s population and the importance of respect for that diversity in the recruitment and involvement of participants. Your answer to this question will guide you to additional questions (if any) relevant to the participants in your study.

6.1.1 Tick as many of the following ‘types of research participants’ who will be included because of the project design, or their inclusion is probable, given the diversity of Australia’s population. If none apply, please indicate this below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Participant</th>
<th>a) Primary intent of research</th>
<th>c) Design specifically excludes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People whose primary language is other than English (LOTE)</td>
<td>[X]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children and/or young people (ie. &lt;18 years)</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[X]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2. Participant description

6.2.1 How many participant groups are involved in this research project? 3

6.2.2 What is the expected total number of participants in this project at all sites? 21

6.2.3. Group 1

6.2.3.1 Group name for participants in this group

Women who left Afghanistan before the Taliban regime

6.2.3.2 Expected number of participants in this group

7

6.2.3.3 Age range

25 years and over

6.2.3.4 Other relevant characteristics of this participant group

Three decades of political and cultural conflict has altered the social and political landscape of Afghanistan. Women who left Afghanistan before the Taliban were subject to the Soviet Commnmist assault and the Mujahedin opposition, their lives shaped by invasion and occupation. Their world-view will present a degree of variance in terms of education, and knowledge to women who experienced the years of brutality of the Taliban. Through visual detail and context this research offers a holistic picture emphasizing the significance of historical positioning for Afghan women.

6.2.3.5 Why are these characteristics relevant to the aims of the project?

The unique characteristics of invasion and occupation that eventually saw the politicisation of the Afghan woman in the blue burqa before and after Sept 11 is reflected in the historical positioning of the Soviet Invasion, the Mujahedin, the Taliban and the Allied occupation. Women who left Afghanistan throughout these different historical periods were exposed to diverse political attitudes. The aim of this research is to explore the residue of warfare and the experience of each historical position. Rarely have Afghan women been able to voice their unique experience or tell their story of immigration or refugee-ism. These circumstances are germane to the stereotypical image Australian’s have of Afghan women. This project becomes the medium for messages needing to be heard and will interpret the lived experience of the Afghan woman by highlighting individual achievements and stories in a powerful visual language.

6.2.3. Group 2

6.2.3.1 Group name for participants in this group

Women who left Afghanistan during the Mujahideen and Taliban regimes

6.2.3.2 Expected number of participants in this group

7

6.2.3.3 Age range

25 years and over

6.2.3.4 Other relevant characteristics of this participant group

It was the events of Sept 11th 2001 that saw a rise in Afghan refugee-ism and the veiled woman materialise
as a social subjugation, viewed with bias and suspicion. Afghan women live on the periphery of mainstream Australia; their lives have been shaped by occupation, invasion and oppression, their stories are often beyond words. Women were the ‘silent majority’ in Afghanistan traumatised by decades of patriarchal and cultural conflict. “Women don’t really matter” (Hawthorne and Winter, 2004) they were denied education, artistic freedom and self expression under oppressive regimes and suffered years of gender inequality. Women have lost loved ones, husbands, children, and homes their extended families are often scattered around the world. The participants have been selected to bring to light their personal experience of the residue of cultural and political warfare and how they negotiate the politics of difference within and between cultures, while maintaining personal religious and cultural integrity in Australia.

6.2.3... Why are these characteristics relevant to the aims of the project?
The voice of the Afghan woman has been overlooked and not recognised for decades. This project will allow her to tell stories of experience; her voice will emerge “from the frozen timeless space previously accorded to the orientalised ‘other’” (Lewis 2004, p. 253). Moreover the Afghan woman has been subjected to decades of what Afghan artist Rahraw Omarzad calls ‘gender apartheid’, therefore Afghan women present a high proportion of disadvantage. This project will show the ‘real’ ingenuity and resilience of the Afghan woman in exile through art based collaborations highlighting how she traverses Australian’s anti-Muslim sentiments as well as the personal challenges and power shifts she is confronted with as an immigrant or refugee.

6.2.3. Group 3
6.2.3... Group name for participants in this group
Women who left Afghanistan after the Taliban regime
6.2.3... Expected number of participants in this group
7
6.2.3... Age range
18 years and over
6.2.3... Other relevant characteristics of this participant group
Afghan-born woman who left Afghanistan after the Taliban regime will present a degree of variance in terms of education, world-views and experience. Some women arrived in Australia as children and some have just been given refugee status in Australia, in Afghanistan they are called ‘the generation of war’. Their personal stories and world-view will provide a greater understanding of what has been lost and what has been acquired. This will provide an interesting contrast across generations and will yield an interesting aspect of trans-national experience.

6.2.3... Why are these characteristics relevant to the aims of the project?
The intention of my research is to illustrate the different characteristics that present to Afghan women. Afghan women from a patriarchal country where women are ‘invisible’ and closeted behind high walled compounds, have a different experience of the residue of cultural and political conflict than the women who came to Australia two or three decades earlier. Afghan-born women in this age group will present a significant degree of variance in life experience, providing an interesting juxtaposition of experience, immigration, refugee-ism and re-location

6.2.4. Your response to questions at Section 6.1 - Research Participants indicates that the following participant groups are excluded from your research. If this is not correct please return to section 6.1 to amend your answer.
Children and/or young people (i.e. <18 years)

6.2.4... Have any particular potential participants or groups of participants been excluded from this research? In answering this question you need to consider if it would be unjust to exclude these potential participants. NS 1.4
Children have been excluded from this research as it is about women from Afghanistan over the age of eighteen and how they negotiate within and between cultures in Australia. How they negotiate dress codes and power shifts as they go about day to day activities in the public and private spheres of their life in Australia.

6.3. Participation experience
6.3.1 Provide a concise detailed description, in not more than 300 words, in terms which are easily understood by the lay reader of what the participation will involve.
The research design involves participation in 3 art based workshops; each of 2 to 3 hours duration, using art to trigger one on one interviews that will be recorded. The workshops will assist in establishing rapport in order to create a comfortable and safe environment so participants can give informed consent and participate in art related activities. The workshops are intended to provide participants with a rich portfolio of ideas as well as demonstrate art techniques and present participants with a pragmatic overview of artistic options and methods that will allow earnest communication of their experiences. Visual diaries will be used
to design and document artistic ideas and every day experiences in order to create a work interwoven with personal narratives that answers the research question. The artistic processes will be documented by photographing the techniques and development of art works in progress, the original art produced by the Afghan women will also be photographed to be published in an Art catalogue publication. Permission from participants will be sought at each level of the project and participants will be assured throughout the project that they are free to withdraw at any stage of the project if they so chose.

6.4. Relationship of researchers / investigators to participants

6.4.1 Specify the nature of any existing relationship or one likely to rise during the research, between the potential participants and any member of the research team or an organisation involved in the research.

None

6.4.2 Describe what steps, if any, will be taken to ensure that the relationship does not impair participants' free and voluntary consent and participation in the project.

Afghan women will be assured by the researchers and in an information sheet, that their well being whilst participating in this program will not be impacted in any way if they do not wish to participate in this project. Participants will be assured that their identity will not be exposed, and those who choose not to participate will be assured that their relationship with community agencies involved will not be impaired in any way.

6.4.3 Describe what steps, if any, will be taken to ensure that decisions about participation in the research do not impair any existing or foreseeable future relationship between participants and researcher / investigator or organisations.

All participants will give informed consent and are free to choose to withdraw at any time for any reason without impairing foreseeable future relationships. All steps will be taken to respect the beliefs, values and world-views and to engage in a sensitive and reciprocal relationship with the Afghan women. I have developed an understanding of the Muslim religion through extended family members and the previously mentioned associations.

6.4.4 Will the research impact upon, or change, an existing relationship between participants and researcher / investigator or organisations?

No

6.4.5 Is it intended that the interview transcript will be shown or made available to participants?

3.1.15

6.5. Recruitment

6.5.1 What processes will be used to identify potential participants?

Potential participants will be recruited through appropriate Community agencies such as Support Association for the Women of Afghanistan (SAWA) Australia, Afghan Site Network and Afghan Woman's Group. All participants will give informed consent and will have the opportunity to have any questions answered through the same process.

6.5.2 Is it proposed to 'screen' or assess the suitability of the potential participants for the study?

Yes

6.5.2... How will this be done?

Through informal conversations and interviews. It is a requirement that participants have conversational English skills to be involved in the project. Potential participants will be asked if they have experienced mental health problems, or who have sought treatment for mental health problems, in the past 6 months. If so they will be excluded from participating in the study. Participants who are screened through this process will be given information about mental health services available in their area such as local Migrant Centres:

* Auburn Migrant Resource Centre (AMRC). Provides information, assistance and well-being support to migrants living in Auburn Local Government Area.

* Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) Assisting with the well being of migrants and refugees in the Blacktown Local Government Area (LGA).

* Migrant Resource Centre Dandenong Office Family Services. The Family Relationship Service Program (FRSP) supports individuals and families to address personal and cultural issues by providing counselling services and integration support.

* Narre Warren Office. The Family Relationship Service Program (FRSP).

6.5.3 Describe how initial contact will be made with potential participants.

I have established networks with Afghan Community agencies. These associations will be used as recommendations and recommendations in the information sheet. I will produce a brief written flyer to describe the project asking that the agencies circulate the information to their members.

6.5.3... Do you intend to include both males and females in this study?

No
6.5.3... Please explain why only one sex is involved in the study. In doing this you will need to demonstrate why this approach is valid.

This research explicitly focuses on the experience of Afghan women and seeks to provide opportunities for them to tell their stories and have their voice heard in a wider context. Afghan women from an orthodox Muslim family may be forbidden to participate in a mixed gender group. For other women their past experience of gender inequality might deny them the opportunity to speak candidly about negotiating patriarchal power shifts within the fragmented Afghan community in Australia.

6.5.4 Is an advertisement, e-mail, website, letter or telephone call proposed as the form of initial contact with potential participants?

Yes

6.5.4.. Provide details and a copy of text/script.

See attached

6.5.5 If it became known that a person was recruited to, participated in, or was excluded from the research, would that knowledge expose the person to any disadvantage or risk?

No

6.6. Consent process

6.6.1 Will consent for participation in this research be sought from all participants?

Yes

6.6.1... Will there be participants who have capacity to give consent for themselves?

Yes

6.6.1... What mechanisms/assessments/tools are to be used, if any, to determine each of these participant's capacity to decide whether or not to participate?

The terms of involvement will be explained to the participants by the researcher or the Director of the Community agency who will provide information about the project as part of recruitment. As the participating women will all be over the age of eighteen, their personal experiences will allow them to make their own decisions about being involved in the project.

6.6.1... Are any of the participants children or young people?

No

6.6.1... Will there be participants who do not have capacity to give consent for themselves?

No

6.6.1... Describe the consent process, ie how participants or those deciding for them will be informed about, and choose whether or not to participate in, the project.

The terms of involvement will be explained in information sheets given to the participants by the researcher or the Director of the Community agency who will provide information about the project as part of recruitment. All participating women will all be over the age of eighteen. Participants will contact the researcher to discuss participation and ask for any necessary clarification before they give informed consent. They will be assured that they can withdraw at any stage without consequences.

6.6.1... If a participant or person on behalf of a participant chooses not to participate, are there specific consequences of which they should be made aware, prior to making this decision? 4.6.6 - 4.6.7

No, participation is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw any time if they choose to do so.

6.6.1... Might individual participants be identifiable by other members of their group, and if so could this identification expose them to risks?

No

6.6.1... If a participant or person on behalf of a participant chooses to withdraw from the research, are there specific consequences of which they should be made aware, prior to giving consent?

No

6.6.1... Specify the nature and value of any proposed incentive/payment (eg movie tickets, food vouchers) or reimbursement (eg travel expenses) to participants.

There are no incentives for involvement apart from the opportunity to share their art work with others.

6.6.1... Explain why this offer will not impair the voluntary nature of the consent, whether by participants' or persons deciding for their behalf. NS 2.2.10 - 2.2.11

Not applicable

6.6.3 Do you propose to obtain consent from individual participants for your use of their stored data/samples for this research project?

No

6.6.3... Give justification

No existing data bases will be accessed in the conduct of this research.
7. PARTICIPANTS SPECIFIC

7.1. Participants whose primary language is other than English (LOTE)

You have indicated that the project involves persons whose primary language is other than English (LOTE)

7.1.1 Describe what steps will be taken to ensure each participant's free and voluntary consent and participation in the project given that the person's language is other than English?

For the duration of this project I will have access to local Community agencies that work with Afghan immigrants and refugees. They will assist to ensure each participant's free and voluntary consent and participation in the project is given in the participants own language.

7.1.2 In what language(s) will the research be conducted?

[X] English

7.1.3 Will participants be provided with written information in the language in which the research will be conducted?
8. CONFIDENTIALITY/PRIVACY

8.1. Do privacy guidelines need to be applied in the ethical review of this proposal?

8.1.1 Indicate whether the source of the information about participants which will be used in this research project will involve:

[X] collection directly from the participant

8.1.1... Information which will be collected for this research project directly from the participant

8.1.1... Describe the information that will be collected directly from participants. Be specific where appropriate.

The information collected will include basic demographic data and other data in the form of audio-recorded interviews, design and documentation of original artworks, photographs and visual vignettes. Artist’s statements (text or oral) will be collected directly from the participants within the safety of specifically designed workshops. The audio-recorded interview invites participants to talk about their experiences of re-location, immigration and refugee-ism as well as their day to day life within the Australian community. This research will not be using an existing data base and participants identities will be protected by a pseudonym

8.1.1... The information collected by the research team about participants will be in the following form(s). Tick more than one box if applicable.

[X] non-identifiable

8.1.1... Consent process

You have indicated that you will be varying the conditions of or waiving consent. See questions in section 8.6

8.1.1... Will consent be specific or extended or unspecified? NS 2.2.14 - 2.2.18

Not Yet Answered

8.2. Using information from participants

8.2.1 Describe how information collected about participants will be used in this project.

This project is a component of my PhD. The interview narratives, documentation and art works gathered from the Afghan women participants will be used to address the aims of this research project and to form part of my thesis.

8.2.2 Will any of the information used by the research team be in an identifiable or re-identifiable (coded) form?

No

8.2.4 List ALL research personnel and others who, for the purposes of this research, will have authority to use or have access to the information and describe the nature of the use or access. Examples of others are: student supervisors, research monitors, pharmaceutical company monitors.

My PhD supervisors Prof. Moira Carmody and Dr. Peter Bansel will have access to the transcripts of the interviews

8.3. Storage of information about participants during and after completion of the project

8.3.1 In what formats will the information be stored during and after the research project? (eg. paper copy, computer file on floppy disk or CD, audio tape, videotape, film)

The interviews will be stored as paper copies, electronic copies and audio files.

8.3.2 Specify the measures to be taken to ensure the security of information from misuse, loss, or unauthorised access while stored during and after the research project? (eg. will identifiers be removed and at what stage? Will the information be physically stored in a locked cabinet?)

All documentation and information will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and the cabinet and the computer has restricted use. Data will be stored on UWS premises according to established procedures in the Centre of Educational Research.

Given the this research involves a proposed waiver of consent and the intent of exposing illegal activity [see NS 4.6.1] the HREC must be satisfied that your response to this question has justified that there is sufficient protection of the privacy of the participants.

8.3.5 The information which will be stored at the completion of this project is of the following type(s). Tick more than one box if applicable.

[X] non-identifiable

8.3.6 For how long will the information be stored after the completion of the project and why has this period been chosen?

5 years is the required time frame for data storage.

8.3.7 What arrangements are in place with regard to the storage of the information collected for, used in, or generated by this project in the event that the principal researcher / investigator ceases to be engaged at
the current organisation?
Information gathered for the project will be stored for the duration of the project and for the mandatory 5 year period at UWS according to UWS and CER protocols, despite the location or status of the principal researcher.

8.4. Ownership of the information collected during the research project and resulting from the research project

8.4.2 Who is understood to own the information resulting from the research, eg. the final report or published form of the results?
The research student

8.4.3 Does the owner of the information or any other party have any right to impose limitations or conditions on the publication of the results of this project? No

8.5. Disposal of the information

8.5.1 Will the information collected for, used in, or generated by this project be disposed of at some stage? Yes

8.5.1... At what stage will the information be disposed?
The required time frame for information disposal is 5 years.

8.5.1... How will information, in all forms, be disposed?
Shredding of hard copies and deletion of electronic copies

8.6. Reporting individual results to participants and others

8.6.1 Is it intended that results of the research that relate to a specific participant be reported to that participant? No

8.6.1... Explain/justify why results will not be reported to participants.
No results will be reported to specific participants but all of the participants will be invited to an exhibition of the participants original art works and a discussion of the project findings.

8.6.2 Is the research likely to produce information of personal significance to individual participants? Yes

8.6.3 Will individual participant's results be recorded with their personal records? No

8.6.4 Is it intended that results that relate to a specific participant be reported to anyone other than that participant? No

8.6.5 Is the research likely to reveal a significant risk to the health or well being of persons other than the participant, eg family members, colleagues No

8.6.6 Is there a risk that the dissemination of results could cause harm of any kind to individual participants - whether their physical, psychological, spiritual, emotional, social or financial well-being, or to their employability or professional relationships - or to their communities? No

8.6.7 How is it intended to disseminate the results of the research? eg report, publication, thesis
By PhD Thesis and publications arising from the findings.

8.6.8 Will the confidentiality of participants and their data be protected in the dissemination of research results? Yes

8.6.8... Explain how confidentiality of participants and their data will be protected in the dissemination of research results
Participants will not be identified
9. DECLARATIONS AND SIGNATURES

9.1 Project Title
Afghan Women in Australia

9.2 Human Research Ethics Committee to which this application is made
University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00314)

9.3 Signatures and undertakings

Applicant / Principal Researchers (including students where permitted)
I/we certify that:
- All information is truthful and as complete as possible.
- I/we have had access to and read the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.
- the research will be conducted in accordance with the National Statement.
- the research will be conducted in accordance with the ethical and research arrangements of the organisations involved.
- I/we have consulted any relevant legislation and regulations, and the research will be conducted in accordance with these.
- I/we will immediately report to the HREC anything which might warrant review of the ethical approval of the proposal NS 5.5.3 including:
  - serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants;
  - proposed changes in the protocol; and
  - unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
- I/we will inform the HREC, giving reasons, if the research project is discontinued before the expected date of completion NS 5.5.6 see NS 5.5.8(b);
- I/we will adhere to the conditions of approval stipulated by the HREC and will cooperate with HREC monitoring requirements. At a minimum annual progress reports and a final report will be provided to the HREC.

Applicant / Chief Researcher(s) / Principal Researcher(s)

Prof Moira Carmody
CER
Signature ___________________________ Date ________________

Mrs Annette Tzavaras
CER
Signature ___________________________ Date ________________

Supervisor(s) of student(s)
I/we certify that:
- I/we will provide appropriate supervision to the student to ensure that the project is undertaken in accordance with the undertakings above;
- I/we will ensure that training is provided necessary to enable the project to be undertaken skilfully and ethically.

Prof Moira Carmody
Signature ___________________________ Date ________________

Dr Peter Bansel
Signature ___________________________ Date ________________

Heads of departments/schools/research organisation
I/we certify that:
- I/we are familiar with this project and endorse its undertaking;
- the resources required to undertake this project are available;
- the researchers have the skill and expertise to undertake this project appropriately or will undergo appropriate training as specified in this application.
10. ATTACHMENTS
This page and all pages that follow don't need to be submitted to your HREC.

10.1 List of Attachments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Attachments</th>
<th>Attachments which may be required/appropriate.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment/invitation</td>
<td>Copy of advertisement, letter of invitation etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Information</td>
<td>Copy or script for participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Copy or script for parent, legal guardian or person responsible as appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent Form</td>
<td>Copy for participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For parent, legal guardian or person responsible as appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For, optional components of the project eg. genetic sub study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer review</td>
<td>Copy of peer review report or grant submission outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HREC approvals</td>
<td>Copy of outcome of other HREC reviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Attachments specific to project or participant group</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research conducted in the workplace or possibly impacting on workplace relationships</td>
<td>Evidence of support/permission from workplace where research will be conducted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People whose primary language is other than English (LOTE)</td>
<td>English translation of participant information/consent forms</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 10.2 Participant information elements

**Core Elements**
Provision of information to participants about the following topics should be considered for all research projects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Elements</th>
<th>Issues to consider in participant information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| About the project             | Full title and / or short title of the project  
                                | Plain language description of the project  
                                | Purpose / aim of the project and research methods as appropriate  
                                | Demands, risks, inconveniences, discomforts of participation in the project  
                                | Outcomes and benefits of the project  
                                | Project start, finish, duration  
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| About the investigators / organisation | Researchers conducting the project (including whether student researchers are involved)  
                                | Organisations which are involved / responsible  
                                | Organisations which have given approvals  
                                | Relationship between researchers and participants and organisations  
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Participant description      | How and why participants are chosen  
                                | How participants are recruited  
                                | How many participants are to be recruited  
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Participant experience       | What will happen to the participant, what will they have to do, what will they experience?  
                                | Benefits to individual, community, and contribution to knowledge  
                                | Risks to individual, community  
                                | Consequences of participation  
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Participant options          | Alternatives to participation  
                                | Whether participation may be for part of project or only for whole of project  
                                | Whether any of the following will be provided: counselling, post research follow-up, or post research access to services, equipment or goods  
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Participants rights and responsibilities | That participation is voluntary  
                                | That participants can withdraw, how to withdraw and what consequences may follow  
                                | Expectations on participants, consequences of non-compliance with the protocol  
                                | How to seek more information  
                                | How to raise a concern or make a complaint  
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Handling of information      | How information will be accessed, collected, used, stored, and to whom data will be disclosed  
                                | Can participants withdraw their information, how, when  
                                | Confidentiality of information  
                                | Ownership of information  
                                | Subsequent use of information  
                                | Storage and disposal of information  
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Unlawful conduct             | Whether researcher has any obligations to report unlawful conduct of participant  
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Financial issues             | How the project is funded  
                                | Declaration of any duality of interests  
                                | Compensation entitlements  
                                | Costs to participants  
                                | Payments, reimbursements to participants  
                                | Commercial application of results  
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Results                      | What will participants be told, when and by whom  
                                | Will individual results be provided  
                                | What are the consequences of being told or not being told the results of  
<pre><code>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
</code></pre>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Elements</th>
<th>Issues to consider in participant information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will results be reported / published</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership of intellectual property and commercial benefits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cessation</td>
<td>Circumstances under which the participation of an individual might cease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Circumstances under which the project might be terminated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Specific Elements**

Provision of information to participants about the following topics should be considered as may be relevant to the research project.
Final Report Request

Final Report Request for your Ethics Project H9289. [ORS]

humanethics@uws.edu.au

Reply all | Sat 9/28/2013, 2:00 PM

Dear Moira,

A final report is now due for the research being carried out under the Ethics Approval "H9289" titled "Afghan Women in Australia". Would you please now forward the final report to the Human Ethics Officer by email to humanethics@uws.edu.au.

The report template, and advice on completing it, is available from http://www.uws.edu.au/research/researchers/forms, but if you have any difficulties, please don't hesitate to contact us by email at humanethics@uws.edu.au.

I hope that the research has been successful.

Kind regards
Human Ethics Officer
Office of Research Services

http://www.uws.edu.au/research/researchers/ethics/human_ethics
Email on behalf of the UWS Human Research Ethics Committee

RHESYSP
References


Mowbray, S., & University of Western Sydney. Centre for Educational Research. (2010). *Students’ perspectives on impacts of the PhD process the PhD as the acquisition of intellectual virtues* (University of Western Sydney thesis).


Walter, M. (2010). *Social research methods* (2nd ed.).


