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**EXAMINING WESTERNISATION AND SECULARISATION: A STUDY OF
CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS CHANGE AMONG MUSLIM UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS IN CANBERRA AND SYDNEY**

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**This thesis is the result of my own original work.
All sources used have been acknowledged.**

Darrell Alan Furgason

ABSTRACT

In broad terms this study sought to understand the cultural and religious implications of an educational experience in the West for overseas-born Muslim university students. It adopted a philosophical approach to the study of cultural and religious change, being specifically concerned with worldview change – that is, the particular ways that the religious and cultural ideas and/or patterns of thinking of Muslim students were challenged or changed as a result of living and studying in a Western educational and cultural environment.

Westernisation and secularisation - two contemporary explanatory frameworks that are easily oversimplified – have often been used by scholars to account for many of the cultural and religious changes experienced by individuals and communities in the Islamic world. Westernisation often refers to socio-cultural change, while secularisation typically refers to changes to religious practices and/or commitments. An important question addressed by this thesis is whether Westernisation and secularisation are valid and suitable frameworks for explaining the ideational changes that occurred.

Data obtained for this study consisted of recorded in-depth interviews conducted among forty Muslim students in Canberra and Sydney, and survey questionnaires distributed to a further forty. In terms of changes to their moral ideas and/or values (moral ideas being one aspect of culture) this study has shown that while the majority of students (56.3%) rejected the moral ideas and values of the West, and remained committed to their own Islamic ideals, for some (43.7%), their experiences in the West were a catalyst for a shift towards a range of distinctly Western moral ideas and values. One of the most important implications of this finding for the Westernisation thesis, given that a "Westernisation of the mind" was found to occur among Muslim students in the West, is that Westernisation continues to be a valid and useful framework for analysing and understanding some of the patterns of cultural change among Muslims in contemporary society.

In terms of their religious ideas and/or patterns of thinking, this study has shown that while 11.3% of the students indeed appeared to move away from distinctly Islamic patterns of thinking, 30% did not change any of their religious practices or ideas since coming to the West, and a further 58.7% either remained the same or became **more Islamic** in terms of

their ideas and/or patterns of thought. Given, then, that a total of 88.7% of the students examined did not move away from Islamic ideas, it would appear that that the secularisation thesis does **not** hold as an explanation of the religious experiences of this select group of Muslim university students who have come to the West to study.

Some of the implications of these findings for the secularisation thesis were then discussed. One of the most important was the need to expand the current understanding of "secularisation" to include changes that can occur to the religious ideas, and/or patterns of thought of an individual. This study has shown that the secularisation thesis requires further refinement if it is to be used as a framework for explaining both ideational change and changes to the religious practices of Muslim university students in the West.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

We live at a time when the opportunities are unique for seeing the way religions and worldviews change through their interaction and migration. Already the study is beginning of how religions react when they have an extensive diaspora, that is where adherents live scattered in foreign places and cities: for example, Hinduism in Fiji, Buddhism among Vietnamese in Los Angeles, Chinese worldviews in Singapore and San Francisco, Islam in Britain and Germany...and so on. We have unfolding before us many movements in which elements from different traditions are put together as ways of reacting, sometimes creatively, to the problems raised by the collision of differing cultures and lifestyles (Smart, 1983:157).

The increasing flow of ideas and cultural practices between the Islamic world and the West continue to bring challenges and changes to the worldviews of Muslims in contemporary society. Westernisation and secularisation - two contemporary theoretical frameworks - are sometimes employed by scholars to account for many of these changes, not only in the worldviews of individuals but also communities in the Islamic world (Esposito, 1995; Hussain, 1984; Ahmed, 1994; Von Der Mehden, 1986). Westernisation often refers to socio-cultural change, while secularisation typically refers to changes to religious practices and/or commitments. Many Muslims view secularisation as a process of religious decline that is associated with the increasing Westernisation of their societies.

In broad terms this study seeks to understand the religious and cultural implications of an educational experience in the West for Muslim university students. Its concern is with the particular ways that the worldviews of Muslim university students may have been challenged or changed as a result of living and studying in a Western educational and cultural environment. And further, it seeks to know whether Westernisation and secularisation are valid and useful frameworks for explaining those developments. Is it legitimate to claim that Muslim students in the West are being Westernised, or secularised, for example? This study consists of an analysis of the accounts by overseas Muslim students of their "everyday life" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:33) while studying at universities in Australia. Its specific concern is to provide further understanding of the ways Muslim students interpret and give meaning to their experiences, situations and lives in a Western cultural setting.

Background

Over the last three centuries in particular, the development of the Islamic world has been comprehensively affected by contact with the West (Hitti, 1962; von Laue, 1987; Daniel, 1993). Interaction has not only been political, but cultural, economic, and religious. Islamic societies have often been buffeted by crises, both internal and external, as they have encountered - and in many instances struggled with - the Western world and its culture and philosophies. Hitti writes,

The transforming force was the impact of the West - the most significant, most important single historical fact throughout that period. The chain of reaction generated by the resultant flow of new ideas - economic, social, political, educational, scientific, philosophic, spiritual, religious - and techniques from Europe and the United States has not yet ceased (Hitti, 1962:86).

Today, as never before, the world as a whole is engaged in processes of intense cross-civilisational exchange. Smart argues,

We live in a planetary place now, a kind of global city, in which communications have bound the world into a tight ball, and in which the great cultures of the past, and the differing cultures and political systems of the present, are in continuing and intimate interplay (Smart, 1981:11).

One result of this contemporary global interchange between cultures is that the Islamic world and the West - two diverse civilisations - are being brought into increasing contact with each other. As Ahmad explains, "in the context of the ideological and civilisational challenge of the contemporary world...Islam and the Western world today once again seem to be in a position to approach each other on a moral and ideological plane" (Ahmad, 1995:63).

A number of authors seeking to examine the interplay and exchange between cultures today do so within a framework called *globalisation* (Robertson, 1987; Featherstone, 1990; Albrow and King, 1990; Sztompka, 1990; Hannerz, 1990; von Laue, 1987). Globalisation, however, can have many meanings; for Akbar Ahmed, globalisation refers to the "rapid developments in communications technology, transport and information which bring the remotest parts of the world within easy reach" (Ahmed, 1994:7). For others, globalisation is best defined as "the crystallisation of the entire world as a single place" and as the emergence of a "global human condition" (Robertson, 1987a:38; 1987b:23). Despite continuing debate - not only concerning the precise meaning of globalisation, but also concerning its effects - there appears to be significant agreement that the globalisation of

ideas, cultural practices, technology and trade will continue to bring both challenges and changes to cultures throughout the world (see Beyer, 1990; Albrow and King, 1990; Hannerz, 1990; Turner, 1990,1994).

One of the challenges of globalisation, some writers argue, is that it contributes to an increasing uniformity in diverse areas of life in contemporary society. Several scholars explain this uniformity.

There is now a world culture. It is marked by an organisation of diversity rather than by a replication of uniformity. No total homogenisation of systems of meaning and expression has occurred. But the world has become one network of social relationships, and between its different regions there is a flow of meanings as well as of people and goods. The world culture is created through the increasing interconnectedness of varied local cultures, as well as through the development of cultures without a clear anchorage in any one territory (Hannerz, 1990:237).

'Globalisation' refers to all those processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society, global society (Albrow, 1990:9).

Globalisation is a more comprehensive concept than the older one of internationalisation and better expresses the most recent trends in the creation of one world...For this reason we can speak of the globalisation of consciousness (Featherstone, 1990:233).

We are, of course, entering on a new global Civilisation (Smart, 1990:299).

The globalisation perspective also seems to be gaining acceptance among scholars seeking to analyse developments - whether political, philosophical, economic or religious - in the contemporary Islamic world (see Esposito, 1995; Albrow, 1990; Ahmed, 1987; Smart, 1983; Ahmed and Donnan, 1994; Ahmad, 1995). Some writers argue that globalisation poses serious challenges for Muslims in contemporary society. Ahmed, for example, says that,

The processes of globalisation have influenced traditional cultures and in such a dramatic way that they have raised issues for Muslims which can no longer be ignored. Muslims are forced to engage with these issues and to formulate a response to them (Ahmed, 1994:7).

One of the most important challenges, from the perspective of this study, is that posed by the flow of cultural practices and ideas between the Islamic world and the West.¹ While some might view the interaction of the Islamic world and the West as two entities "locked together" with others in what has been described as the *economic* world-system (Wallerstein, 1974; 1984), there is an increasing need to understand the role that *cultural* exchanges play in shaping global developments. As Robertson explains it, "The economic

content of international contact has been emphasised at the expense of the cultural flows which were previously taking place alongside the material exchanges” (Robertson, 1987a: 24).

Although there continues to be some disagreement over the place of 'culture' in analyses of global interconnections, many writers feel that it has unnecessarily been left out (Hannerz, 1989a: 204; Boyne, 1990; Worsley, 1990). Appadurai (1990) for example, argues that while globalisation is rightly identified with the transfer of technology, it is also marked by the accelerated pace at which informational and cultural exchanges take place. Others agree, arguing that the emphasis upon economic interchange as a main feature of the contemporary globalisation process is continuing to shift to a focus on the processes of *cultural* interchange. As Robertson puts it, “Today, the flow of culture between nations typifies the globalisation process” (Robertson, 1987a:24).

In this era of increasing globalisation, then, the global system continues to be structured not only by flows of capital and by power distributions, but also by intercultural exchanges - by the flow of people, ideas and attitudes across geographical boundaries. As Ahmad explains, “Perhaps one of the greatest achievements of the present age lies in opening up the whole world to all thought movements and cultural influences” (Ahmad, 1995:71).

In addition, the spread of modern social institutions (like universities), and legal concepts (like human rights and justice) have also served to challenge traditional values and attitudes. As a result, according to Featherstone, “more and more people are now involved with more than one culture, thus increasing the practical problems of intercultural communication” (Featherstone, 1990:8).

One technology that has played a major role in facilitating access to and involvement with other cultures is the VCR. It has contributed to the rapid exchange of moral notions, cultural ideas and norms. Ahmed notes that, “The outside world now reaches into even the most guarded Muslim home, most obviously through television and the VCR” (Ahmed, 1994:7). Other technologies too - like the satellite dish - have created the capacity for people in one culture to be exposed to other cultures from the privacy of their own homes.

While it might be tempting at this point to speculate about the possible homogenisation of culture - a move toward a "global culture" - this study makes no such assumptions. For one thing, cultural "influences" are often "domesticated", according to Ahmed, being interpreted and incorporated into local communities according to local values (Ahmed, 1990:3). In addition, it is not always the case that cultural flows are from West to East. As Ahmed notes, "culture flows do not necessarily map directly on to economic and political relationships, which means that the flow of cultural traffic can often be in many different directions simultaneously" (Ahmed, 1994:3).

A case in point is the proliferation of Hindu ideas and personalities in the USA over the last few decades, much of this the result of interviews and coverage of Hindu ideas and personalities on daytime talk shows, and through Hollywood productions. Even words and expressions are crossing cultural boundaries. Owing to the visibility of developments in and around the Islamic world over the last few decades, words such as *Fatwa* (a religious opinion), *Jihad* (struggle, including armed effort), and *Ayatollah* (highly learned scholar and cleric) are common in the West (Ahmed, 1990:2).

Given that cultural flows are in many different directions, then, the speculation of an emerging singular global culture appears unwarranted. As Featherstone points out, "the varieties of response to the globalisation process clearly suggest that there is little prospect of a *unified* global culture, rather there are global cultures *in the plural*" (Featherstone, 1990:10). (Italics mine)

One result of the increase in cultural contact between the Islamic world and the West, nonetheless, is that Muslim communities worldwide are being exposed to - and affected by - philosophies, ideas and practices from the West that now raise critical issues for the future of Islam itself (Ahmed and Donnan, 1994; Rahman, 1982; Esposito, 1992; 1995). Contemporary Western developments in politics, economics and culture (see King, 1988; Featherstone, 1990; Hall and Gieben, 1992) for example, continue to produce rapid and profound social, political and cultural change on a global scale (von Laue, 1987; Albrow and King, 1990). Some of these changes include: the demise of the East European Communist bloc and the end of the Cold War; emerging political philosophies like globalism and postmodernism; economic developments such as the emerging new trade blocs in Europe and the Americas (NAFTA); international conglomerates and transnational

companies; and the redefining of social categories like sexual "norms", gender, feminism and the "family". Derek Hopwood identifies the sentiment prevalent among many Muslims today in response to these (and other) changes.

The present current of Islamic feeling is very noticeably a reaction, especially amongst the young, to unbearable and rapid change, to the pressures of modern life against which they turn by longing for the tranquillity of earlier periods; a reaction against the West which has disrupted traditional life and values; a reaction against the corruption and decadence of those who have succumbed to the temptations of wealth and the secular life (Hopwood, 1983:117).

As a result, many parts of the Islamic world are now engaged in processes of re-evaluation - of finding genuine Islamic ways to deal with issues like "modernity", and the globalisation of Western cultural practices (Ahmed and Donnan, 1994; Turner, 1994). One way of "accommodating culturally the impact of rapid and often disruptive social change" (Othman, 1994:123) many Muslims argue, is for the "Islamisation" or in some cases the "re-Islamisation" of their states and societies (Muzaffar, 1994:113; Othman, 1994:123), a process, according to Muzaffar, "by which what are perceived as Islamic laws, values and practices are accorded greater significance in state and society" (Muzaffar, 1994:113).

According to one writer, Samuel Huntington, contemporary cultural encounters like that between the Islamic world and the West will increasingly lead to what he calls a "clash", not only in terms of values but also in terms of worldview and indeed civilisation itself.

It is my thesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural...The clash of civilisations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilisations will be the battle lines of the future (Huntington, 1993:22-49).

Whether Huntington is correct in his analysis or not is outside the scope of this study, and remains to be seen. Much of the current frustration of Islamic societies with the West, however, is concerned not only with what is perceived as Western dominance of international political, economic, and technological developments, but with the philosophies of the West itself. The encounter (and experiment) with various "Western" political philosophies such as Democracy, Socialism and secular Liberalism, for example, has produced political turmoil and in some cases revolution, as Muslim societies have struggled with what they perceive as Western intellectual and cultural challenges to the fundamental tenets and values of the Islamic faith (Furgason, 1992; Hussain, 1984; Salame, 1993). Rahman has gone so far as to assert that, "So long as Muslims remain

mentally locked with the West in one way or another, they will not be able to act independently or autonomously” (Rahman, 1982:136).

The personal and societal encounter with other philosophies common in the West such as moral relativism (King, 1998), individualism (Akbar, 1988:11), and rationalism (Mol, 1971:301; Hall and Gieben, 1992:ch.5), has also often resulted in what many Muslims feel is an ongoing undermining of the Islamic way of life.

One response to these and other intellectual challenges posed by the West is that suggested by Rahman, who argues that "the most important and urgent thing to do", is,

to 'disengage' mentally from the West and to cultivate an independent but understanding attitude toward it, as toward any other civilisation, though more particularly to the West because it is the source of much of the social change occurring throughout the world (Rahman, 1982:136).

This can be achieved, Rahman continues, not by following the "secularism" of the West, but by beginning once again to rethink everything from a truly Islamic perspective. For this, he explains, "Muslims must go back to the original and definitive sources of Islam and perform *itjihad* on that basis" (Rahman, 1982:142).

Westernisation

The term *Westernisation* has often been utilised as an explanatory framework by a diverse range of authors seeking to analyse contemporary global socio-cultural developments (von Laue, 1987; Latouche, 1996; King, 1988; Darling, 1979). For von Laue, for example, the human condition in the present and future can only be understood within the framework of the "revolution of Westernisation", a "gigantic, all-inclusive, and still incomplete historic process" that has "culturally subverted traditional cultures" (von Laue, 1987:3-5). He argues that,

The major effect of the world revolution of Westernisation...has been to undermine and discredit all non-Western cultures. The victorious Westerners...left the rest of the world humiliated and in cultural limbo. Under the Western impact traditional cultures and local customs had no future; they crumbled away (von Laue, 1996:5).

Some of the specific results, von Laue claims, include "cultural chaos characterised by a loss of purpose", "moral insensibility", "a penchant for violence", "social and political fragmentation", and "psychological misery of knowingly belonging to a 'backward' culture" (von Laue, 1987:5).

For Latouche too, Westernisation is a process that destroys non-Western cultures. He argues that it affects the ways people think - their "attitudes of mind" - and facilitates the "worldwide standardisation of lifestyles" via a "civilising process" rooted in Western cultural norms (Latouche, 1996:2). He also claims that "by alienating Third World peoples from their own culture, Westernisation makes them...uncultured, turning them into passive consumers" (Ibid. p. 41).

For those concerned specifically with developments in the Islamic world, Westernisation describes a process of "cultural subversion", or "cultural self-liquidation" (Umar, 1988:93). Others view Westernisation as a process whereby Islamic societies scramble to adjust to the influence of the social, political, economic, cultural and moral practices and ideas that have come out of the Western world and its "modern" societies (Esposito, 1995:243-254; Ahmad, 1995:63-81). For many Muslims, Westernisation is viewed as a destructive process because it often comes disguised as "modernisation", and because it facilitates the "secularisation" of their societies. Indeed, in many parts of the Islamic world, Westernisation is viewed as, a) **synonymous** with modernisation (Munson, 1988:118; Ahmad, 1995:67; Darling, 1979:xx), and b) a **cause** of secularisation (Ahmad, 1995:68).

Modernisation and Westernisation

While many within the Islamic world itself have called for the "modernisation" of Islamic societies, there has been much debate and confusion as to what the term actually means in an Islamic context (see Rahman, 1982; Ahmad and Donnan, 1994). Despite the appeal of the idea of modernity to many Islamic communities today, great cleavages are often created between groups that want to modernise and those who do not. Calls to "modernise" laws, institutions, lifestyles, and even religions have become standard items of political rhetoric. Debates over the precise meaning of the term, however, continue to produce frustration and hostility not only within Islamic societies, but also between the Islamic world and the West. For many Muslims, modernisation is desirable, if it means industrial, technological or educational development, rather than cultural development. Munson explains that, "although opposition to technological and economic modernisation is rare, opposition to social modernisation is not" (Munson, 1988:108).

The extent to which it is possible to preserve Islamic cultural norms and traditions while promoting rapid and extensive technological and economic change, however, has become a contentious issue, affecting Muslim communities in one way or another throughout the world today. For, in the drive to duplicate Western technological achievements, many Muslim societies often experience a clash of value systems. "Development", while being promoted as one of the goals of modernisation, is often perceived by many Islamic communities with suspicion because in many instances the philosophy upon which development ideas and policies have been formulated has its roots in a Western value system standing in opposition to Islamic ideals.² Munson explains,

Modernisation...is usually understood to imply industrialisation, urbanisation, expansion of secular education, greater participation in government, and the diminution of the legal and social role of ethnic, religious and other primordial entities. For the Islamic world and the third world generally, all this boils down to imitating the West, namely northern Europe and its American offshoot. When one speaks of modern education in the Islamic world, one is usually speaking of Western-style education and likewise for modern industry, technology, law and culture (Munson, 1988:118).

Others agree. In terms of economic development, Ahmad writes that the West's value system is marked by "economic liberalism", and "individualism", and that "the global influence achieved by these values...through colonial expansion, missionary outreach and cultural encounter is an emerging reality" (Ahmad, 1995:64). This situation, Ahmad claims, "is looked upon by people in other parts of the world as a Western intrusion" (Ibid. p. 64).

One of the current problems with modernisation in the Islamic world, according to Rahman, is the fact that "the new technology and its attendant phenomena are 'imported', and are not organically related to the traditional cultures of these developing societies" (Rahman, 1988:89). As a result, many Muslims believe that technological or industrial development often comes at the expense of development along genuine Islamic lines. It has thus been perceived as "anti-Islamic" development that has caused tears in the socio-cultural fabric of Muslim societies. Esposito explains,

As dependence on Western models of development was seen as the cause of political and military failures, so too, some Muslims charged, blind imitation of the West, an uncritical Westernisation of Muslim societies that some called the disease of "Westoxification", led to a cultural dependence that threatened the loss of Muslim identity (Esposito, 1995:251).

Thus, while modernisation has been heralded by many in the West and in the Islamic world as the pathway of progress, many Muslims have become increasingly frustrated, as modernisation has often meant - and been experienced as - Westernisation, with its accompanying ideological and moral impurity (Hitti, 1962:87; Hussain, 1984:7; von Laue, 1987). As Esposito explains, "Socioculturally and psychologically, modernisation was seen as a legacy of European colonialism perpetuated by Western-oriented elites who imposed and fostered the twin processes of Westernisation and Secularisation" (Esposito, 1995:251).

This is not to say, however, that all Muslims view modernisation as a negative phenomenon. Many Muslims have embraced the modernisation of their societies, declaring that modernisation, with its emphasis on technology and "development", need not be anti-Islamic *per se*, but see modernisation as an essential part of national development in a truly Islamic fashion. Theirs is a call for an "Islamising of modernity", rather than a "modernising of Islam".

Secularisation and Westernisation

In addition to being seen as synonymous with "modernisation", Westernisation has also been perceived as a cultural process that has facilitated the "secularisation" of Islamic societies (Von Der Mehden, 1986:8-11; Smith, 1995:20-30; Esposito, 1995; Hussain, 1984; Ahmed, 1994). Despite, the changing nature of the concept of secularisation, and the "difficulty of providing a fully encompassing definition for it" (Wilson, 1987:159), secularisation, according to Wilson commonly refers to a "pattern of social development", or a "social process" in which a number of changes occur. One of those changes involves a diminishing of the importance and role of religion and religious values in the development of society (Martin, 1978; Bruce, 1992; Turner, 1967; Demerath and Williams, 1992). Another important change, many sociologists have argued, is that religion becomes increasingly privatised, and, as authority is transferred from religious institutions to secular bodies, it loses much of its "public" relevance (Parsons, 1982:420; Berger, 1967:133f; Luckmann, 1967:103; Bellah, 1970:43). And a third, and perhaps more important change from the perspective of this study, is that, according to Wilson, "religious consciousness declines", as "everyday life is negotiated by pragmatic attitudes and cause-and-effect thinking" (Wilson, 1987:160).

The secularisation process, many argue, has had a significant impact on Islamic societies. Esposito, for one, writes that, "Secular, 'valueless' social change was identified as the cause of socio-moral decline, a major contributor to the breakdown of the Muslim family, more permissive, promiscuous societies, and spiritual malaise" (Esposito, 1995:251). Muzaffar agrees, identifying the secularisation process with Western thought, and noting that the West's emphasis on "secularised, relativistic values", are a "serious challenge to Islamic values and the Islamic worldview" (Muzaffar, 1987:21). Ahmad, too, attacks secular ideas and values, claiming that "the principles of secularism, individualism, economic liberalism and nationalism represent the hallmarks of the West's value system" (see Muzaffar, 1995:64) and that "secularism has corrupted man's moral roots" (Ibid. p.73), while Umar is adamant that "Islam has a system of its own", and "to secularise Islam would, in fact, be an exercise in de-Islamisation" (Umar, 1988:91).

In response to not only the perceived, but often real challenges of "Westernisation" and "secularisation", many Muslim communities have attempted - in different ways and in the midst of very diverse political and social settings - to return to the basic tenets of Islam, revive the religious life of their communities, and reassert once again their own unique socio-religious identity (Furgason, 1992; Esposito, 1983; Rahman, 1982; Ahmad, 1995).

Ahmad explains,

People in other parts of the world do not look towards the Western system as their national identity; instead, they have a growing sense of their own distinct identity and in this context they are concerned that cultural influences from the West may hamper their own moral, cultural, economic and political flowering (Ahmad, 1995:65).

Historical Context of the Study

In a world of increasing globalisation, the processes of contact between West and the Islamic world reveal the need for greater understanding of the ways that ideas and experiences shape - and are shaped by - the cultural and religious worldviews of different societies. Smart, for example, explains that since "worldviews have their own potency...they are a vital factor in the shaping of civilisations and of groups. And since we all live together in an increasingly intimate global society, it is important that we understand one another's beliefs" (Smart, 1987:11).

Muslim university students living abroad in Western countries experience first hand the philosophical, cultural and religious life of the West (Antoun, 1994:160-189; Gerholm, 1994:190-212). They are exposed to Western lifestyles, cultural practices, and Western social and personal philosophies that affect their perception of/and attitudes towards the West, and towards their Islamic religion and values. These attitudes, together with their experiences in the West, will affect the way they relate to their own societies - as well as the West - when they return to their own countries. Altwajri notes the influence that the West and its culture can have on Muslim university students.

In the field of higher education where, annually, tens of thousands of Muslim students attend Western educational institutions, and many colleges and universities are erected in the Muslim world, following mostly Western models, the challenge of Western civilisation appears in its clearest form. The Muslim scholars, engineers, scientists and social scientists who return from the West do not return with only the technical knowledge they received in the West, but they also carry with them traces of the culture of that technical knowledge. If not aware of this fact, they can cause serious cultural conflicts between themselves and their Islamic environment (Altwajri, 1983:abstract).

Given the increase in overseas-born Muslim university students coming to the West to study, the primary research question this study seeks to address then, is, in what ways are the cultural and religious worldviews of a select group of Muslim students affected as a result of living and studying in the West?

There are a number of subsidiary questions related to the primary research question that this study also seeks to address. The first is whether Muslim intellectuals do think and act differently after exposure to Western education and culture. The second is whether there are particular themes or patterns in the ways Muslim students view, interpret, and give meaning to their lives and experiences in the West. This study attempts to come to grips with these and other important questions, and plot in more detail the types of challenges and changes which the interface with the modern West has generated.

Importance of the study

This study is important for a number of reasons.

1) The study of religious and cultural worldviews contributes to further understanding of the ways that ideas and beliefs are shaping - and are being shaped by - the cultural, intellectual, and religious life of the contemporary world. As Smart argues,

The power of ideas and symbols is obvious in today's world. Even the materialist

idea that ideas and symbols are secondary has a powerful effect on our society. So the analysis of the worldviews and symbolic themes which abound in human history and in contemporary happenings is a vital intellectual enterprise (Smart, 1984:1).

Given that worldviews change as individuals interact with other cultural and religious traditions, it is important to plot the direction of these changes, and to see how others view the world. Smart continues,

The modern study of religion helps to illuminate worldviews, both traditional and secular, which are such an engine of social and moral continuity and change; and therefore it explores beliefs and feelings, and tries to understand what exists inside the heads of people (Smart, 1983:1).

In order to understand some of the diverse ways Muslims have responded intellectually to "the looming and penetrative forces of the West" (Smart, 1984:2), this study attempts to come to grips with the question of the ways that Muslim "consciousness" - an important category of worldview (see Smart, 1987:6) - is constructed in contemporary society.³ Just how do Muslims students living in the West view, and account for their lives and experiences in a Western cultural setting? Given, as Berger and Luckmann argue, that "reality is socially constructed" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:13) the question of the relationship between Muslim thought and the social context in which it arises and is shaped, is an important sociological one that this study seeks, in part, to address. As Berger and Luckmann point out, "the sociology of knowledge must first of all concern itself with what people 'know' as 'reality' in their everyday lives. The sociology of knowledge, therefore, must concern itself with the social construction of reality" (Ibid. p. 21).

Another important sociological question is raised by the claim that a globalisation of culture - and more specifically, a globalisation of Western culture - may facilitate what Featherstone calls a "globalisation of consciousness" (Featherstone, 1990:233). While certain ideas such as universal human rights, democracy, the environment, the dignity of human beings, etcetera, do seem to be more common throughout the globe - due in part to the growing reach and influence of the international media - the extent to which these may represent, as von Laue argues, the "transition to a global consciousness" (von Laue, 1996:xix) needs to be examined. Considering the many worldviews in contemporary society, with their diverse, and often conflicting interpretations of "reality", it is important to examine not only the influence that a Western social context may have in shaping the interpretations of Muslim students, but also whether certain ideas and/or ways of thinking

are indeed becoming globalised. There is thus a need, as Smart argues, to explore "the geography of human consciousness" (Smart, 1983:6). Smart explains,

We have to comprehend the structure of another's world: and in general, we have to try to understand the structures of belief inside the head of the believer (Smart, 1987:16)...It is the way we cross our own horizons into the worlds of other people ...So, what is it like to be a Buddhist in Sri Lanka or a Catholic in Ireland (Smart, 1987:22)?

This study is concerned in part with the formation of Muslim religious and cultural consciousness in contemporary society, and particularly with the fate of that consciousness in a Western cultural setting. It is focused primarily on individuals within a tradition, although it is hoped that it will contribute to a greater insight into some of the *macroscopic* changes taking place in the broader Islamic world as well. In essence, then, this study seeks to sketch, in broad lines, the living context in which the Islamic tradition finds itself in relation to the modern Western world.

2) There is a need, given the increasing number of overseas students attending Australian universities each year,⁴ and given the little research conducted to date among them, to understand the influences that an educational experience in Australia may have upon their cultural and religious life. As Richard Antoun notes, migration for education is an increasing contemporary phenomenon, and further research focusing on university students is vital. He writes,

Little attention has been paid to the interpersonal aspects of migration and the reaction of migrants to prolonged exposure to alien cultures ...and radically different living circumstances. Even less attention has been paid to international migration for education...the pursuit of secular education to gain professional skills in a postmodern world (Antoun, 1990:160).

This study aims to fill a gap in the current research in two important ways. First, while most of the current research to date involving university students focuses on Christian university students in the West, this study focuses on the experiences of **Muslim** university students, and particularly those who have come to the West to study. And second, while most of the studies done on university students to date examine either cultural or religious change, this study examines both. Its concern is not only with the cultural implications of the quest by Muslim for higher education in the West - a quest that "is perhaps the most radical type of migration in its implications for cultural change" (Antoun, 1994:163) - but also with the degree to which the quest for secular education continues to have important implications for Islamic religious commitment.

Given the increasing number of Muslim students attending universities in Australia, then, important questions remain unaddressed concerning the influence the West and its culture may have upon them.⁵ To what extent, for example, does the "detachment of culture from territory" (Ahmed, 1994:7) facilitate cultural and religious change? Do Muslim students, as Ahmed argues, "feel the need to redefine the self in a world which seems constantly on the move" (Ibid. p. 6)? And are there any adjustments to Islamic religious beliefs and practices? As Ahmed notes, it is vital to explore "the meaning of Islam on foreign soil (Ibid. p. 6). What then are the effects when Muslim students - who are in the minority when they come to the West to study - "encounter the cultures of the majority" (Ibid. p. 6)? And to what extent is it true that "old certainties are challenged", and that "the diaspora has led to the oft-remarked quest for identity and authenticity... particularly for those who find themselves abroad" (Ibid. p. 6)?

Richard Antoun, too, raised some important questions when he claimed that "the quest for secular education continues to have important religious dimensions" (Antoun, 1994:160), especially when Muslim students are "confronted by ways of living which directly contradict them." This study seeks to add to current research by addressing some of the important questions raised by these and other studies concerning what Ahmed calls, "the predicament of living abroad" (Ahmed, 1994:16).

Another, Ninian Smart, argues that, "typically each religious or other worldview is a kind of syncretism, or at least a blend of motifs" (Smart, 1987:49). This study seeks to examine whether - and if so to what extent - Muslim students have indeed assimilated elements of a Western worldview into their own Islamic worldview. As Ahmed notes, "Sensitive and innovative research" is urgently needed "for understanding the Muslim diaspora" (Ahmed, 1994:6).

Other important, yet unaddressed, questions concern the nature of the contemporary relationship between the Islamic world and the West, and the ways that Muslim students view that relationship. As interaction between civilisations with different worldviews increases, cultural and religious conflicts can also increase, affecting many parts of the world (Smart, 1994; Glenn, 1981). Chandra Muzaffar, for example, points out that some significant differences exist between the Islamic world and the West, and, as a result, the possibility of conflict between the two is very real. He explains,

We have no choice but to admit that Islam, as an ideology and a culture, is very different from secular Western civilisation. Islam it is true, contradicts the basic postulates of the secular civilisation that rose out of the Europe of the Enlightenment. Can we expect civilisations which are so drastically different to coexist happily? Or is conflict inevitable (Muzaffar, 1994:121)?

Given that numerous misunderstandings have plagued the historical relationship between the Islamic world and the West in the past, it is important to understand Muslim perspectives on and attitudes toward the contemporary relationship between these two different civilisations. To what extent is it true for Muslim students today that the Islamic world is "reacting strongly to the mounting political, cultural and social pressures from the modern Western world, in order to preserve its own traditional structures and identity" (Austin, 1983:36)?

Other important questions remain unaddressed as well. To what extent, for example, do Muslim students face issues of "prejudice, stereotypes and caricatures of Islam created by the West" (see Ahmed, 1994:5)? And, do students return to their place of origin with "new and novel versions of the world" (Ibid. p. 5)? Kurshid Ahmad, too, raises a question concerning the nature of the relationship between the Islamic world and the West, and the important ramifications of that relationship for future global developments when he writes that, "the question of the possibilities of confrontation, competition or cooperation between Islam and the West remain complex, yet difficult to ignore" (Ahmad, 1995:65).

3) Westernisation and secularisation are two contemporary frameworks often employed by scholars to account for changes to the cultures and religions of individuals and societies in the contemporary world. von Laue, and others have argued, for example, that cultural Westernisation continues to be a global phenomenon, and that this process involves the wholesale exportation of Western values, customs, and social institutions to the non-Western world (von Laue, 1987; Latouche, 1996).

This study aims to address gaps in the current understanding of the processes of Westernisation and secularisation in three important ways. First, it is empirical. Despite the many claims by scholars concerning the influence of Westernisation and secularisation on both individuals and communities in the Islamic world today, little empirical study has been conducted to ascertain the nature and extent of these processes, or whether they are occurring among Muslim university students in the West. Frank Darling, for example,

laments that there is a real "deficiency of scholarly literature" on Westernisation (particularly in Asia), and calls for further empirical research. He explains that,

in spite of the extensive Western role in the development of contemporary Asian societies, very few scholars, Asian or Western, have sought to analyse and compare the broad forces and movements involved in this important historical process (Darling, 1979:xvii).

Second, this study attempts to link the micro and macro levels of analysis. An examination of the challenges and changes to the cultural and religious worldviews of Muslim students - at the micro level - may help contribute to a clearer picture of the nature and direction of cultural and religious change in Muslim societies at the macro level, and the extent to which socio-cultural processes (such as Westernisation and secularisation) play a part. As Seyyed Nasr explains it,

it is important to turn once again to the Islamic reality itself and to examine that reality in the context of the Islamic world and the external ideas, concepts and forces which have played and continue to play a role in that world and to which that reality has responded and is responding today (Nasr, 1980:2).

And third, it adopts a philosophical approach to the study of cultural and religious change. In much of the literature to date, Westernisation and secularisation are viewed from the perspective of changes to cultural and religious behaviour. This study examines Westernisation and secularisation from the perspective of changes to ideas and patterns of thought. As Latouche argues, "we need to look at attitudes of mind, to realise how successful Westernisation has been" (Latouche, 1996:2). The primary question this study seeks to address, then, is whether becoming culturally Western, or becoming religiously secular, is to adopt a certain set of ideas, rather than behave in a certain way.

Plan of the Study

Chapter two begins by defining the scope, methods and procedures used in this study, then briefly illustrates some of the methodological issues faced in an examination of the "self-reports" of individuals concerning their own experiences, and ends with some statements regarding the limitations and assumptions of the study.

Chapter three consists of a review of some of the literature relevant to this study, together with a brief historical glimpse into the experiences of several prominent Muslim thinkers whose lives were changed as a result of study in the West. It also consists of a discussion of the theoretical approach used in this study, illustrates some of the issues involved in

examining "culture", and argues for the validity and usefulness of viewing culture as "ideas" for an examination of Westernisation and secularisation.

Chapter four illustrates some of the theoretical and methodological issues associated with examining the Westernisation thesis, and outlines the approach this study takes in an exploration of Westernisation among Muslim university students in the West.

Chapter five consists of an examination of some of the challenges and changes to the moral ideas, values and/or patterns of thinking of Muslims students in the West. It shows that many students experienced varying degrees of change in several important ways, and examines the suitability of Westernisation as a framework for explaining those changes. Some implications for the Westernisation thesis are then discussed.

Chapter six illustrates some of the theoretical and methodological issues associated with examining the secularisation thesis, and outlines the approach this study takes in an exploration of secularisation among Muslim students in the West.

Chapter seven examines some of the challenges and changes to the religious ideas, values and/or patterns of thinking of Muslim students in the West. It shows that many students experienced changes to their religious worldview in a number of ways, and examines the usefulness and validity of secularisation as a framework for explaining those changes. Some implications for the secularisation thesis are then discussed.

Chapter eight consists of a comparison and summary of some of the findings of chapter five (moral change) together with the findings of chapter seven (religious change). It presents a discussion of some of the factors that appeared to contribute to the experiences of students who experienced change to both their moral and religious ideas, and those who experienced no change to either. Some other findings of this study are then presented concerning the general effects of a university education on Muslim students, together with some implications for the future.

1. See Peter F. Beyer, "Privatization and the Public Influence of Religion in Global Society", in Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity, M. Featherstone, ed., Sage, London, 1990. Beyer argues, for example, that "We cannot separate the secularisation of modern society from its globalisation"(p. 380).

2. The contemporary (that is, Western) concept of "modernity" is explained by Stuart Hall in Formations of Modernity, Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben, eds. Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992. Hall argues (p. 15) that "essential to modernity is the belief that everything is destined to be speeded up, dissolved, displaced, transformed, reshaped. It is the shift - materially and culturally - into this new conception of social life which is the real transition to modernity." Hall explains that in attempting to be "modern", a society "becomes seized with and pervaded by this idea of ceaseless development, progress and dynamic change."

3. Smart argues that beliefs, consciousness and practice are all parts or components of an individual's worldview. He writes, "In a word, belief, consciousness, and practice are bound together" (Smart, 1987:6).

4. In The Australian, September 29, 1999, for example, Diana Thorp, in her article "Overseas Students Flock to Our Unis", writes that "Overseas students have continued to pour into Australian universities, despite the Asian crisis, with new international enrolments up 20.5 per cent from last year. Almost 45,000 overseas students began higher education studies in Australia in 1999, compared with 37,292 in 1998, and 9892 in 1989." Thorp concludes that education thus ranks as "one of Australia's top 10 exports."

5. See Jeffrey K. Hadden, Encyclopedia of Sociology. As Hadden notes, the socio-cultural environment within which a religious individual lives can influence those beliefs. He argues "Changes in beliefs and structure of religions reflect adaptations, accommodations, and innovations to continuously changing cultural, political, and economic environments" (p. 1642).

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

Research Scope

This study adopts a global perspective concerning research on the Islamic World. Given, as Ahmed argues, that globalisation has precipitated an increase in culture flows between nations, the study of Islamic communities must no longer take place solely within the narrow confines of a local context alone. Islam is a global religion,¹ and as such it is important to understand contemporary Muslim experiences within a global context as well as a local context. Ahmed writes,

One consequence of the globalisation process is the necessity to look at Islamic studies not as an esoteric or marginal exercise, but as something that concerns the global community (Ahmed, 1994:2).

Others, like Esposito, agree, noting that all true Muslim believers see themselves as belonging to a single universal community (*Ummah*) that transcends tribal bonds (Esposito, 1995:245). Umar expresses that sense of community well when he writes that,

Everywhere Muslims are noted for their keen consciousness of the world Muslim Community, they are moved by a sense of a Universal Muslim Solidarity, and maintain in the most diverse geography, not only the essentially distinctive Islamic rites...but also to some degree, a sense of common cultural heritage (Umar, 1988:84).

Islam is thus recognised by its adherents as a worldwide religion and community, despite individual and national variations in expression and direction. A case in point is the worldwide solidarity among Muslims over the struggle in Bosnia. Notes Ahmed, "The recent events in Bosnia have created a sharp awareness of Muslims as a world community, both in the West and among Muslims themselves" (Ahmed, 1994:7).

Owing to this sense by individual Muslims that they belong to a single universal community, that they are part of the "Islamic world", this study is not limited to respondents from one nation only, but incorporates responses from Muslim students from many ethnic and national origins. This study intends to be global. It represents an attempt to reflect as many-sided a picture of Muslim experience and perspectives as possible. Owing to the paucity of empirical research in this area, it is also highly exploratory. While there are obvious differences among such a sample due to many factors (for example

historical, geographical, linguistic, political, economic, etcetera) there is still a common *Weltanschauung*² - Islam³ - that unites them. It was important from this researcher's perspective, therefore, to examine the views and experiences of Muslim students from the "Islamic World" as a whole.

Definition: The Islamic World

For the sake of simplicity, then, I shall make use of the definitions of "Muslim country" and the "Islamic world" that are employed by other scholars. According to Asaf Hussain, for example, it is commonly said that there are various Muslim countries. (Hussain, 1984:xiii) These countries can be grouped into regions. For example, Pakistan and Bangladesh are classified as South Asia; Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan as Southwest Asia; Indonesia and Malaysia as Southeast Asia; Tunisia, Morocco, Libya and Algeria as North Africa; Kuwait, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates as the Gulf region; and Egypt, Saudi Arabia, South Yemen, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq as the Middle East. Based on this definition, Muslim countries appear to be those countries where Muslims are in the majority. The Islamic world, however, includes other countries that might not necessarily be recognised as Muslim countries. According to Seyyed Nasr, the Islamic world is to be defined as "that part of the world in which there is either an Islamic majority or a substantial Muslim population even if the degree of attachment of the Muslims in all these regions to Islam is not exactly the same" (Nasr, 1980:18).

For the purpose of this study I shall make use of both of these definitions, but with several important additions. First, given that there are Muslim minorities in many Asian countries,⁴ I propose to include them as a valid part of the "Islamic world". As Piscatori points out,

There are other Asian countries that neither have Muslim majorities like Iran or Bangladesh, nor have extremely small Muslim minorities like Japan or Vietnam, but that play an important part in the political consciousness of modern Muslim elites. These states have significant Muslim minorities and include India, the Soviet Union, China, the Philippines, Thailand, and Burma, among others (Piscatori, 1986:2).

And second, given that according to the Islamic worldview Muslims are united worldwide by their common faith, I propose to include in the "Islamic world" all Muslim communities, whatever their size and wherever they are. The Islamic World, for the purposes of this study, then, also include those Muslim minorities, groups and movements that are unified by virtue of their commitment to the religion of Islam. This study will not

focus exclusively on any particular region or country, therefore, but on the Muslim peoples as a whole.

Definition: The West

This study adopts the perspective that "the West" is both a geographical and civilisational entity. In terms of its geography, the West is "dominated by the English-speaking nations, the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia, as well as by the English-speaking elites of various other countries" (Ahmed, 1992:99). However, and perhaps more importantly, the West is not just a geographical entity, it is also viewed as a "dominant world civilisation" (Ahmed, 1992:99), an "ideology" (Latouche, 1996:27), and even as "an emerging...universal culture" (Gerholm, 1994:198). Latouche argues that,

The West has to do with a geographical entity - Europe - with a religion (Christianity), a philosophy (the Enlightenment), a race (the white man) and an economic system (capitalism) - but it is not to be identified with any one of these features. Are we not dealing, therefore, with a culture or civilisation in the wider sense (Latouche, 1996:25)?

The primary focus of this study will be on the ideational, rather than the geographical features of the West. As Hall argues, "Clearly, 'the West' is as much an idea as a fact of geography" (Hall & Gieben, 1992:276).

Research Design

This study makes use of a) a qualitative research approach,⁵ supplemented by b) a small quantitative survey. Qualitative research methods were chosen due to the desire to illuminate the depth and breadth of Muslim experiences and views within the context of their social and cultural environment. As many of the questions asked during the interviews were open-ended, it was felt that a qualitative research approach would allow for the richness of individual experiences to become visible. Second, a qualitative research approach was chosen because of its ability to highlight individual differences. One of the aims of this study was to map some of the diversity of Muslim responses to contemporary social processes. And third, this study sought to provide further understanding of the ways Muslim students interpret and give meaning to their experiences, situations and lives in a Western cultural setting. It was felt that qualitative research methods would greatly assist in uncovering the thoughts, perceptions and feelings of informants.

This study also incorporated a small survey questionnaire into the research methodology in order to test the validity of the interview responses and further develop some of the emerging themes. The need to stay close to - and seek to express - the views of respondents was a strong factor influencing the decision against the use of pre-coded responses and computer analysis. Instead, I kept as many questions as possible open-ended, and designed the questionnaire in order to provide information in several conceptual and practical areas believed to be vital to an understanding of the experiences and views of Muslim students in the West.

Research Methods

This study employed three methods of data collection.

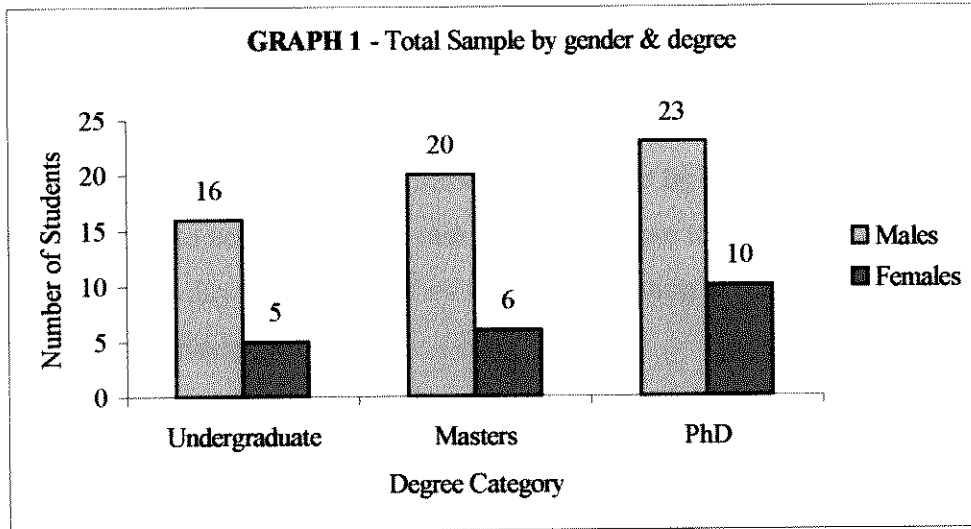
First, in depth recorded interviews were conducted in English⁶ with forty individual Muslim students from various ethnic and national backgrounds to gain a broad picture of Muslim experience in the West⁷ (see Appendix A). Interviews varied in length from between forty-five to ninety minutes. I was the only interviewer. As much as possible, interviews were conducted in public places, such as in lecture rooms, cafeterias, or university student lounge areas. Where females were interviewed, all efforts were made to ensure either that a friend (or husband, as the case may be) of the respondent was nearby. In each case, I asked the respondents if they were comfortable with the location before proceeding with the interview.

(Important: From now on this collectivity will be referred to as **Sample A.**⁸ The reader should also be aware that due to the large volume of material, not all the data obtained - via the interviews and questionnaires - was used in this study).

Second, a survey questionnaire was distributed and collected (usually the next day) from a further 40 Muslim students from various ethnic and national backgrounds⁹ (see Appendix B). A pilot survey was conducted first among a small group of students to assess the validity and relevancy of the questions in the survey questionnaire. As a result, the survey was found to be too long, and vague in some areas. It was subsequently shortened, and any unclear or irrelevant questions removed.

(Important: From now on this collectivity will be referred to as **Sample B.** The **Total Sample** refers to both)

The following graph illustrates the total sample according to gender and degree.



The third method of data collection employed in this study consisted of my own observations, made during numerous visits to mosques, seminars, conferences by Muslim organisations, and to the homes and residences of Muslim students on campuses in New South Wales (NSW) and in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

By drawing on multiple streams of evidence, each with its own limitations - and also strengths - this study aims to extend our understanding of the ways Muslim university students view their life and experiences while living in a Western cultural setting. My aim, however, is not to approach Islam with a carefully constructed set of hypotheses about Muslim experiences - a hypothetical "Orientalist" approach (see Said, 1978)¹⁰ - but rather to view the experiences of Muslims through their own eyes. As Smart argues, "It is in itself a noble and imaginative task, to find out what the world looks like from another person's or society's point of view. Each of us has a worldview, which forms a background to the lives we lead" (Smart, 1987:4).

This study adopts an interpretive approach to culture associated with the work of Clifford Geertz (1973). As Geertz expresses it, "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (Geertz, 1973:9) This study adopts the view, then, that its task, as Jackson explains, is "to

produce a written text which offers an interpretation of other people's interpretations of events they themselves have experienced" (Jackson, 1989:173).

Overall, this research has elements of a community study. According to Demerath and Williams (1992:204), community studies offer "an important locus for observing the interaction between large-scale macro-phenomena and the tightly grained world of the individual." In order to accomplish this task, this study aims to produce an in-depth account of the day-to-day "lifeworlds"¹¹ of Muslims studying at universities in Australia for between one and five years.

In the main, this study consists of self-reports by participants. Students were asked to give an account of their social life - their attitudes, perceptions and lived experiences - during their time of study in an Australian cultural setting.¹² Interview and survey questions were retrospective, seeking to elicit the students' views concerning their perceptions and attitudes before arriving in Australia, during their course of study, and in a few cases, after the completion of their degree. An important aim of the study was to remain as close as possible to the views expressed by respondents. This thesis, then, is grounded in the perceptions, knowledge and experiences of Muslim students.¹³

Sampling

Given that my aim was to explore the range of Muslim responses to global processes and cultural/religious issues, this study sampled for viewpoints, not for numericity; for quality, not quantity; for depth rather than breadth. In this way, each student selected might conceivably represent a different viewpoint, and as such could provide valuable insight into the influence of particular social processes across a specific religio-cultural group.

This study, then, consists of an opportunity sample, rather than a random or representative sample. Given the practical and logistical difficulties associated with finding a sufficient number of students willing either to be interviewed on tape, or to complete the questionnaire, respondents were selected simply on the basis of their availability, or the opportunity that presented itself to me at the time. While this researcher sought to find an equal number of both male and female respondents from a wide variety of Islamic societies and ethnic backgrounds, there were a number of reasons that this was not feasible. First,

due to Australian laws of confidentiality, it was not possible to gain "official" access to overseas Muslim students through their university student records. It became necessary, therefore, to search for willing respondents one-by-one by asking Muslim students if they knew of any other overseas Muslims on campus. In addition, I was often able to make contact with Muslim students through their friends and room-mates, and by visiting Muslim prayer rooms on campus (with the permission of the Muslim Student's Association). Second, while the Muslim Student Associations (MSA) at several universities were very helpful in introducing this researcher to Muslim students who were active members of their association, many of the Muslims on campus were not members, and it proved difficult to make contact with a broad selection from diverse national backgrounds.

Third, owing to the fact that university students often choose to study at a particular university because of its reputation or (perceived) specialisation in certain disciplines (such as medicine, law, science or engineering), this researcher found that some universities had more students from certain Islamic nations or ethnic groups than others. One result of this uneven distribution of ethnic backgrounds and nationalities was that as I was seeking participants during the fieldwork phase of this project, more Pakistani and Indonesian students were available - and thus selected as respondents - than (say) Saudi Arabians (see Appendices A & B for details).

Fourth, due to geographical and/or other factors such as university fees, living conditions etcetera, there were far fewer students from Muslim countries in the Middle East and Africa than from South East Asia and South Asia. Although attempts were made, then, to obtain an equal number of respondents from the various nationalities encountered, this was simply not possible within the time frame of a PhD study.

And finally, although attempts were made to find an equal number of both male and female respondents, there were several reasons why this did not occur. First, there appear to be fewer overseas Muslim females than males studying at Australian universities. One possible explanation for this situation is that fewer females than males are able to get access to tertiary education - and particularly to post-graduate education - in their own countries. Another possible reason for this situation (offered by a number of my male informants) is that it is considered culturally improper in some Muslim societies for

unmarried females to travel unaccompanied by a male, and to live alone in a foreign country.

The second reason why there are fewer female respondents in this study than males is that when contact with females was made, fewer females were willing to participate in the study than males. Whether this was due to issues in Islamic culture in regards to propriety in male-female interaction, or to issues of my own gender is unknown at this point. I made a deliberate decision - given that the questions were open ended - not to make use of a female assistant for the interviews with female Muslims as I wanted to ensure as much consistency as possible in the style, approach and direction of the interviews.

Interviewees and survey respondents were selected, then, according to the following criteria:

- a) They were Muslims from overseas who had come to study full time at an Australian university...either in Canberra or Sydney.
- b) They were not permanent migrants or Australian born.
- c) They were available and willing to talk about their experiences.

Methodological Considerations

Analysis of everyday "culture" and ideas based on individuals' accounts has two important methodological problems, according to Frank Lewins. First, what people say is not necessarily what they do (Lewins, 1995:56; 1992:57-58). He writes, "Alongside the formal or official account" of what people may say is happening, or should be happening,

is a domain of activity and thinking which is not immediately apparent to the outsider. It includes behaviour such as individuals' private thoughts and behaviour, back room deals, favours, manoeuvring to achieve private ends, and even illegal activities such as bribery (Lewins, 1992:58).

Lewins regards this as the "informal organisation" of peoples' everyday decision making processes. People often present their formal account of their actions for any number of reasons or motives, when in fact the informal has been the reasons for their particular actions at that time. Thus, there may be many reasons for peoples' behaviour.

When studying China, Lewins notes, scholars acknowledge that "it is necessary to incorporate both the informal and the formal realms, if one is to avoid studying mere

appearances" (Ibid. p. 58). We cannot overlook the informal realm in any analysis of peoples' behaviour because to do so would be to overlook a "large domain of evidence". There is "an enormous gap between the professed norms and ideals of the culture and the way things actually work - a gap that exists in all cultures" (Ibid. p. 58).

The second problem in "confining analysis to respondents' beliefs and accounts", according to Lewins, is that " 'insiders', or members of a particular society or group are not always themselves aware of the underlying patterns or structures of which they are a part", and, as a result, may "rarely reflect on the them" (Ibid. p. 59).

In order to compensate for these two methodological difficulties, this study aims to take note of both explicit (recognised, conscious, spoken) and tacit (less recognised, conscious, unspoken) aspects of Muslim experience and life in the West.

Limitations of the Study

The study focused primarily on examining the experiences and views of Muslim students at universities in Australia. The study was limited to...

- a) Overseas-born Muslims students - not Muslim immigrants, tourists or indigenous Muslims.
- b) Students currently enrolled in degree programs at the following university campuses...
 - Australian National University (Canberra)
 - Canberra University (Canberra)
 - University of Sydney (Sydney)
 - University of New South Wales (Sydney)
- c) An opportunity sample; students were selected as research subjects not according to any representative criterion, race, ethnicity, gender, class or socio-economic background, but according to their availability and willingness to participate. Given the non-representative nature of the sample, this researcher is aware of the inability to make generalised statements on the basis of findings relating to this sample alone.
- d) The survey research method using self-administered questionnaires, and in-depth interviews.

The study did not assess the effect of other variables that could shape students' attitudes and experiences such as socio-economic background, political affiliation, differences of sect (Sunni, Shi'a) etcetera.

Assumptions of the study

In this study the following assumptions have been made:

- a) The students (respondents) are exposed to Australian cultural life through classroom and social experiences, and media.
- b) The students were sincere and truthful in their responses to the interview and survey questions.¹⁴

1. See Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity. Ahmed points out the extent of the contemporary Islamic world when he says, "And let us not forget the truly global nature of Muslim society which totals something like one billion people living in about 50 countries with significantly some ten to fifteen million living in the USA and Europe" (p. 7).

2. In English, the term "worldview" finds its origin in the German word *Weltanschauung*. It means one's "world outlook" or "A general conception of the world in which beliefs, values and metaphysical presuppositions are all woven together so as to instil the world with significance, and facilitate the transition from thought to action" (see A Dictionary of Political Thought, 1982, p. 493).

3. This study views and approaches "Islam" with the perspective of Khurshid Ahmad (see "Islam and the West: Confrontation or Cooperation?"). Ahmad writes that, "Islam, after all, represents an ethical, ideological, ideational and cultural phenomenon. It is a belief system, a code of conduct based on a hierarchy of values, norms, standards, laws and institutions. It represents a way of life, a world system and a social movement for historical change. It also represents a historical tradition spread over the last fourteen centuries, if not more. It is also a global phenomenon" (p. 64).

4. See James Piscatori, International Relations of the Asian Muslim States. Piscatori says, "More than half of the World's 800 million Muslims live in Asia" (p. v).

5. See Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds. Handbook of Qualitative Research, Sage, California, 1994. See also John T. E. Richardson, ed. Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for Psychology and the Social Sciences, BPS Books, London, 1996.

6. This did not seem to pose any problems - interpretively, or methodologically - given that all overseas students are required to have a high degree of proficiency in the English language in order to be accepted for study at an Australian university.

7. See "Introduction", by Stephen Tyler, in Cognitive Anthropology, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York, 1969. According to Tyler, interviews with key informants "yield data amenable to logical and statistical analysis" in order to "generate the organising principles underlying behaviour." See also O. Werner & GM Schoepfle, Systematic Fieldwork: Foundations of

Ethnography and Interviewing, Sage, California, 1987.

8. The reader should be aware that the respondents have been deliberately grouped into two samples (A & B) because different data collection methods were used in each case. Data obtained via open-ended questions in a face-to-face interview situation will quite naturally be very different in terms of breadth and depth to that obtained via a written survey questionnaire. By having two distinct samples, each obtained through different methods, data from one can be used to check and compare with data from the other.

9. In cross-cultural research, sociologists most frequently rely on 1) the survey method (See Melvin Kohn, "Cross-National Research as an Analytic Strategy", in American Sociological Review, 1987, 52:713-731; See also Jan-Erik Lane, "Data Archives as an Instrument for Comparative Research", in Comparative Methodology: Theory and Practice in International Social Research, E. Oyen, ed., Sage, California, 1990) and 2) intensive interviews (See Daniel Bertaux, "Oral History Approaches to an International Social Movement", in Comparative Methodology, 1990).

10. Edward Said's analytical framework of "Orientalism" faces severe limitations when applied as a framework for analysing migrant Muslims, according to Akbar Ahmed, who writes, "Said's Orientalism is dated in this new theoretical frame and we need to move beyond its position" (Ahmed, 1994:5). Although initially important as a framework that has served to expose the "continuing prejudice, stereotypes and caricatures created of Islam by the West", Orientalism "has led to a cul-de-sac". Orientalism "has become a cliché, and third world literature is now replete with accusations and labels of Orientalism being hurled at critics and at one another at the slightest excuse. This has had the stultifying effect on the dispassionate evaluation of scholarship" And, "in the passion generated by the debate, what has been missed out is the great contribution of many Orientalist scholars" (Ibid. p. 5).

11. See Reading Human Geography. The term lifeworld refers to, "The familiar meanings and routine practices that make up and mark the sites of ordinary, everyday life" (p. 506).

12. This study consists of an examination of the ways that Muslim university students in Australia account for their everyday experiences and "way of life" in this country. It represents an investigation of students' ideas and opinions, and of their perceptions of reality. Perceptions are important, because they represent the "facts" of reality to the perceiver...the way "reality" is. As Smart points out, "the facts include the way (a person) feels and thinks about the world" (Smart, 1987:16). Thus, it is important, as Smart argues, "to see the world as others see it", which involves a "meaningful migration into the mind of the other" (Smart, 1983:4).

See Concept and Empathy. Smart argues that where the study of a religion is concerned, "there could be no proper structural description of a faith save by those who belong to it. The only description of religion worth having is one that comes from within" (p. 197).

13. See Nick Pidgeon, "Grounded Theory: Theoretical Background", in Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for Psychology and the Social Sciences, by John T.E. Richardson, ed., British Psychological Society, London, 1996. See also Ward Goodenough, "Ethnographic Field Techniques", in Handbook of Cross Cultural Methodology, Vol. 2, H. Triandis & J. Berry, eds., Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 1980.

In Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs, Ninian Smart argues that "this 'entering into' other peoples' thought-and feeling-worlds is essential to the central descriptive task in the study of religion," and that "a major part of this entering in can be achieved by talking with people" (p. 175). All texts in this study, therefore (oral and written) are acknowledged to be only partial constructions of reality, their truth-value being grounded in a social context.

14. Whether the respondents' replies were influenced by the fact that this researcher is not a Muslim remains speculation at this point. Having a Muslim interviewer might just as well have caused the respondents to be untruthful in order to appear orthodox in their beliefs. It should not be assumed, therefore, that the respondents would have been more sincere or truthful had the interviewer been a Muslim.

CHAPTER THREE

EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS OF THE STUDY

This chapter consists of an examination of some literature considered relevant to the research question, and a discussion of the theoretical approach subsequently adopted in this study. By way of background, it begins with a brief glimpse into the historical experiences of several Muslims who studied at universities in the West. Westernisation and secularisation are not addressed in this chapter, but are examined in chapters five and seven respectively.

Some Historical Experiences as Background

Over the last six decades - and the last two in particular - substantial numbers of Muslim students from overseas have enrolled in Western universities, yet little research has been carried out to ascertain the influence that the experience of living in a Western culture has had upon their Islamic culture, and upon their religious attitudes and beliefs. As Richard Antoun so aptly notes,

Little attention has been paid to the interpersonal aspects of migration and the reaction of migrants to prolonged exposure to alien cultures...and radically different living circumstances. Even less attention has been paid to international migration for education...the pursuit of secular education to gain professional skills in a postmodern world (Antoun, 1994:160).

From the writings of at least one author, however, there is some indication that many of the Muslim students that do return from study in Western nations have been greatly influenced by their experiences, and that they subsequently often become influential, bringing change to the ideas and direction of Islam back in their own societies. Esposito, for example, notes that such were the experiences of Muslim students returning from US and Canadian universities over the last six decades that "many...would return to play major leadership roles in national and international Islamic movements" (Esposito, 1995:279).

One such person was Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) described by Esposito as "the architect of radical Islam" (Esposito, 1992:126) who "transformed the ideological beliefs of al-Banna and Mawdudi into a rejectionist revolutionary call to arms" (Ibid. p. 127). Qutb, who "grew up to be an admirer of the West", according to Esposito, travelled to the United States to study educational organisation in 1949. It was this experience at a university in the USA that

changed his attitudes towards the West itself, Qutb becoming an outspoken critic of the West, its values and lifestyle. Esposito writes,

This experience proved to be a turning point in his life. After this visit he became a severe critic of the West and, shortly after his return to Egypt in 1951, he joined the Muslim Brotherhood. Although he came to the United States out of admiration, Qutb experienced a strong dose of culture shock which drove him to become more religiously observant and convinced of the moral decadence of Western civilisation...he was disgusted...He was scandalised by the sexual permissiveness and promiscuity of American society, the free use of alcohol, and free mingling of men and women (Esposito, 1992:127).

Other important thinkers who had firsthand experience of the Western world, via a Western education, were Jamal al-Dinal-Asadabadi (also known as al-Afghani, 1839-1897), Muhammad Abduh, 1849-1905, and Muhammad Iqbal, 1878-1938. Although these thinkers were Muslims with a Western education, their attitudes upon returning to their own nations depicted somewhat of a politico-theological confrontation with the West, according to Esposito (1992:127)

In postwar Indonesia, too, according to Esposito, many of those who influenced Islamic thinking and became the "prime transmitters of contemporary revivalist thinking into the archipelago" did graduate work in North American, British, and Commonwealth universities (Esposito, 1995:197-198). One Indonesian writer who has played a major role in bringing the "modernist" philosophical influences to Islam in that nation is Amien Rais, of the Muhammadiyah, who studied at the University of Chicago, and, who, according to Abdurahman Wahid, the current president of Indonesia, is "anti-Western" now.¹ In addition, according to Abdurahman Wahid, "In Indonesia modernist Islam also emerged through the Masjumi Party", and the leadership of Masjumi was "Western educated".

Some Research Gaps and Shortcomings

Research on cultural and religious change among university students is an important area of academic inquiry - particularly in contemporary society where tens of thousands of overseas students enter the universities of Australia each year.² And yet, no studies could be found that examined the influence and effect on Muslim university students in Australia of socio-cultural processes like Westernisation and secularisation. Some studies on foreign students in Western universities that were found, however, were insightful in a number of ways, despite the fact that most focused only on Christian students. Some of the findings of

these studies that were considered useful to this study, therefore, will be discussed in this chapter.

The reader should be aware, however, that this review is not intended to be exhaustive, but illustrative. Studies that have been included in this review, then, are there because they either help to identify some of the gaps in current research on foreign students in Western universities, or because they illustrate some of the theoretical or methodological shortcomings of contemporary research on religious and / or cultural change.

The three main shortcomings of much of the research to date that this review intends to address are:

- 1) The paucity of research on cultural and religious change among Muslim university students, and particularly those who have come to the West to study.
- 2) The need to examine the intellectual experiences of Muslim students in the West.
- 3) The need to examine cultural change not only in terms of changes to behaviour, but also in terms of changes to ideas and patterns of thought.

Each of these shortcomings will now be addressed, beginning with a discussion of the problems associated with examining "culture", and cultural change.

Issues in Examining Culture

In today's social context of increasing intercultural contact, the need for cross-cultural research is becoming more urgent. The contemporary debate concerning culture, however, reveals that there is no current widely accepted definition of the term; rather, there are various ways to view culture, depending on the perspective from which it is being studied. As a sociologist, for example, Samuel Gilmore, writes, "Culture is still defined through an extensive variety of perspectives, sanctioning a broad historically validated range of options."³ As a result, he argues, "All collective social practices are potentially symbolic and therefore potentially cultural."⁴ For another sociologist, Richard Peterson, culture tends to be used in two ways: as a "code of conduct embedded in or constitutive of social life", and as "the symbolic products of group activity" (Peterson, 1990:498). For F. Lewins "Everyday culture" refers to "the patterns of day-to-day thinking and behaviour of particular social categories, such as intellectuals, peasants and workers" (Lewins, 1992:97).

For Richard Shweder, a cultural psychologist, culture "refers to persons, society, and nature as lit up, and made possible by some already-there intentional world, an intentional world composed of conceptions, evaluations, judgements, goals, and other mental representations" (Shweder, 1990:26). For Peter Jackson, a cultural geographer, "cultures are 'maps of meaning' through which the world is made intelligible" (Jackson, 1989:2). For J.P. Dupuy, the system which constitutes a culture can be seen as "an organised system of symbols (language, art, myths, rituals) which permit men to establish significant relationships among themselves and with their world, and to find meaning in their environment and their own lives."⁵ And for Serge Latouche, culture is "the totality of representations and symbols by which man gives meaning to his life, his real experiences" (Latouche, 1996:39).

In spite of the many perspectives on culture available, it is generally accepted by most that ideas play an important role in cultural formation and change. Louise Spindler, for example, writing as an anthropologist, argues that culture can be viewed as a "sifter of ideas" (Spindler, 1977:5). While culture is often viewed as "customary, shared patterns for behaviour", cultures can be distinguished from one another, she says, because each contains "certain ideas patterned in certain ways, and including basic assumptions about how the world works" (Ibid. p. 5). The salience of ideas in culture formation and change is evident in the works of other writers as well. Elvin Hatch writes that,

Culture is the way of life of a people. It consists of conventional patterns of thought, and behaviour, including values, beliefs, rules of conduct, political organisation, economic activity, and the like, which are passed on from one generation to the next by learning (Hatch, 1985:178).

Another, Dan Sperber, says, "culture is made up first and foremost of...contagious ideas", and that "to explain culture is to explain why and how some ideas happen to be contagious" (Sperber, 1996:1). And for I. Wallerstein, "culture" is an "idea-system"(Wallerstein, 1990:38).

Culture as Ideas

While acknowledging that there is currently much effort in social science circles to produce a sharper, more clarified concept of culture,⁶ this study adopts a perspective often used in cultural anthropology - namely that it is important to study culture from the philosophical perspective. Ideas are important. Writing as a cultural anthropologist, Clyde

Kluckhohn affirmed the importance of researching a group's (cultural) philosophy when he wrote, "There are no organised groups of human beings without their own philosophy...If the behavioural facts are to be correctly understood, (their)...philosophy must be known" (Kluckhohn, 1949:356). Another, Jaques J. Maquet agrees, arguing,

It is now commonly accepted...that philosophy is a universal category of culture...That is to say, in any particular social heritage, there is a philosophy which is transmitted from one generation to the next...(just as a certain type of family, cooperative patterns, and technological skills are parts of the culture of any society). No society could survive without a system of explanation. A cultural philosophy is the philosophical part of a culture that seeks to explain and give meaning to life experiences (Maquet, 1964:7).

I shall attempt, then, to take the vantage point of the cultural philosopher in this study, whose aim, according to Maquet, is to understand "the cultural mentality or philosophy of a given people" (Maquet, 1964:7).

Examining Culture Change

This study adopts an approach to culture change used by contemporary writers like Dan Sperber (1996) - that culture is best understood as a collection of mental "representations", or beliefs, moral values, symbols and ideas, and that culture change involves the transmission of these from one individual to another. As Sperber explains, "Culture is made up, first and foremost, of...contagious ideas...To explain culture, then, is to explain why and how some ideas happen to be contagious" (Sperber, 1996:1).

Others like Bocock agree, arguing that even the most basic categories of thought, such as "ideas of time, space, and number", are "collective representations" - socially shared frameworks within which individual experience is classified. They help us to 'map out' or make sense of the world (Bocock, 1992:240). This study focuses, then, on the ways that ideas, together with the meanings given to them by the individual who holds them, are modified as a result of intercultural contact.

By way of clarification for the reader at this point, the scope and nature of this study's inquiry into ideational change was restricted in two important ways. First, in this study, Islam is viewed as an ideology, giving the content to the ways people view the world they live in.⁷ As Bloor points out,

religion is essentially a way of perceiving, and making intelligible our experience of the society in which we live...Immersed as we are in society we cannot grasp it

as a whole in our reflective consciousness except by using a simplified picture, an image, or what may be called an 'ideology'. Religion...represents an ideology of this sort (Bloor, 1976:46).

Second, given that an ideology can be examined in terms of its *function* or *content* (see Lewins, 1988:159-174), this study adopts Lewins' content approach to the analysis of ideology. Lewins initiates a new approach to defining "ideology" which entails the defining of ideology not by the social function it has or performs - but rather on the basis of the content of beliefs. Lewins explains, that "functional definitions are concerned with what ideology **does**, or with its function in relation to other social phenomena", while "content oriented definitions are concerned with what ideology **is**" (Lewins, 1988:161). This approach avoids the dangers of "assuming both the function of beliefs and the nature of their meaning", according to Lewins (Ibid. p. 162).⁸ This study, then, is more concerned with the **content** of Islamic ideology, rather than the function it serves in the social ordering of students' lives.

Given the previous discussion, this review now continues with an examination of some of the shortcomings of current studies on university students, and finishes with a presentation of the theoretical approach used in this study.

Review of Some Current Studies

One of the main shortcomings of studies that focus on the experiences of university students is that there is often little discussion of ideational change, nor the role that patterns of thought may have played in the overall experiences of these students. In one study by A.F. Furnham, (1993)⁹ for example, the author provides some important insights into the ways foreign students make "adjustments" to life at British universities, but does not address the possibility that students might make ideational "adjustments" as well. Furnham also notes, for example, that foreign students often face stress. As he says, there are stresses caused by problems such as "racial discrimination, language difficulties, problems with accommodation, separation anxieties, dietary changes and restrictions, financial stress and loneliness", and there are also various "academic" stresses (Ibid. p. 28). An important question unaddressed by Furnham's study is whether the stress experienced by foreign students might actually occur on the intellectual level, as well as on other levels.

Some other findings made by Furnham that raise important questions from the perspective of this review are that foreign students seem at first to go through a "honeymoon phase" where nearly everything about the new country and university is exciting and wonderful (Furnham, 1997:27), followed by a stage of depression, rejection, hostility and withdrawal, and then finally a stage of "adjustment, autonomy and independence" (Ibid. p. 30); second, that as a result of their experiences, many foreign students "develop a deep and abiding love for the country in which they studied" (Ibid. p. 31) and as a result many "are loath" to return to their own country after graduation (Ibid. p. 30); and third, that foreign students experience "distress", and "culture shock"(Ibid. p. 30).

While Furnham's study has provided many valuable insights into life in the West for foreign students, there is a need to examine many of his findings from the ideational, and not just the emotional, or attitudinal perspective. For example, where Furnham claimed that students experienced "rejection", "hostility" and "withdrawal", it seems important to this researcher to consider where these responses occurred – whether on the emotional, behavioural or ideational level. An important question unaddressed by studies like Furnham's is whether is it possible for students to experience intellectual "withdrawal"? Or, to what extent is it possible for students from a religious tradition to become "hostile" in mindset towards ideas encountered at university?

The second area largely unaddressed in studies like Furnham's concerns the extent to which "culture" and culture change among foreign university students should also be examined from an ideational perspective. According to Furnham, for example, many foreign students experience "culture shock" during their time at university (Ibid. p. 30). An important question, then, is whether culture shock might also occur on the ideational or intellectual level.

A second study that illustrates the importance of examining change among university students from an ideational perspective is that by Ahmed Altwajiri (1983). Altwajiri's study consisted of a comparison between the notion of "Academic Freedom" from an Islamic perspective, with that of a Western Liberal philosophical perspective.¹⁰ While Altwajiri's study admittedly did not set out to examine the experiences of Muslim university students *per se*, he was concerned with the "ideological, cultural, political and social" contact between the Islamic world and the West (Altwajiri, 1983:1). An important

question raised by Altwaijri in his introduction, for example, concerns the impact upon Muslim students of their time studying in the West. He says,

As tens of thousands of Muslim students graduate from Western educational institutions...it becomes of great relevance to ponder the impact of this phenomenon and the cultural, social and intellectual consequences to which it could lead (Altwaijri, 1983:3).

Altwaijri's concern regarding Muslim students returning from the West seemed to be that "without full awareness...of the underlying nature of the Islamic ideology, and how it differs from Western ideologies, intellectual and cultural conflicts will be inevitable" (Ibid. p. 4). This study aims to explore Altwaijri's important claim that Western university education has a profound "intellectual" and "cultural" impact on Muslim students. Rather than maintain the dichotomy between intellect and culture, however, this researcher argues that culture can – and should – be examined as systems of ideas, given that Islam is a comprehensive worldview. This study, then, seeks to examine “cultural” change as ideational change.

A third study that clearly illustrates the need to examine culture and culture change from an ideational perspective is that by Omar Zentani (1986). Zentani's study focused on the impact of the educational experience in the USA on traditional Islamic cultural beliefs, such as attitudes toward family obligation, decision-making, status of women, privacy, etcetera.¹¹ Zentani showed that the Western educational experience did impact the students' attitudes towards a selected area of Islamic cultural beliefs, particularly in regards to family relations - that is, male-female roles, and in making decisions on issues such as choosing a husband or wife (Zentani, 1986:57-62). However, Zentani's study was fairly limited in scope, and did not attempt to examine ideational change as an important part of cultural change in general. In addition, his study does not address changes that may have occurred in other areas of their Islamic cultural beliefs, such as in their perceptions of/and attitudes towards Islam itself, in their moral ideas, or in their perceptions of the Western culture in which they were living.

One of Zentani's findings that was of particular interest to this researcher was that as Muslim students made adjustments to the Western (American) society in which they were living, there was little effect on their attitudes towards aspects of their own Islamic culture. He concluded, for example, that, "The adjustment to (the) American environment has little effect on the Muslim students' attitudes toward their traditional cultural beliefs" (Ibid. p.

61). One of this researcher's aims is to examine Zentani's finding - that living in the West had "little effect" on Muslim students' attitudes towards their own cultural beliefs. However, this research focuses on changes to traditional Islamic ideas, given that culture can, and should be examined from the ideational perspective. This study is primarily concerned, then, with changes to the cultural ideas and patterns of thinking of Muslim students in the West, and only in a secondary way with changes to cultural behaviour and practice.

A fourth study that illustrates the need to examine cultural change from an ideational perspective is that by Richard Antoun (1994). In a case study of three Jordanian students who spent between 4 and 11 years studying in Western countries, Antoun focused on the experiences and implications of what he called the students' "quest for higher education abroad" (Antoun, 1994:160-189). While examining the usefulness of concepts such as "accommodation", "acculturation", "assimilation", "reinterpretation" and "rejection" for explaining the students' experiences while in the West, Antoun found that one student was "living on the border" in terms of his experiences, being attached to both his own culture and that of the West (Ibid. p.187), that another had "compartmentalised" his life and followed a strategy of "controlled antagonistic acculturation" (Ibid. p. 187), while the third returned to his own culture a "cognitive retreat" (Ibid. p. 169). This research intends to examine some of Antoun's findings from an ideational perspective - and particularly the notion that a Muslim student can become a "cognitive retreat" while studying in the West.

Another finding by Antoun that this study intends to examine further is that students had assimilated a range of values that they had encountered while in the West. According to Antoun, one student had identified with the values of "effective use of time, material modernisation, hierarchicalisation, human concern for the individual, and a universal system of rewards that did not recognise ethnic differences" (Ibid. p. 168); another liked "religious pluralism", and "the system of government and social order", where "everyone had the right to do what he likes" (Ibid. p. 174); and a third had "absorbed the American work ethic", and enjoyed the "freedom", where "nobody gets in your business" (Ibid. p. 179).

This research expands on Antoun's by examining the possibility that changes to ideas and patterns of thought may play an important role in any assimilation of Western values by

Muslim students living in the West. Unlike Antoun, however, who focused largely on the "interpersonal" implications of migration and study for three Jordanian students, this study aims to isolate ideational change among eighty Muslim students from many different ethnic backgrounds and nations, examining those changes in the light of the Westernisation and secularisation theses.

Given that this study intends to examine religious change as well as cultural change, it is important now to turn the attention of this review to several studies specifically examining religious change among university students.

Examining Religious Change

One of the main shortcomings of studies to date that focus specifically on religious change among university students, is that the research approach is either too narrow in scope, or is exclusively concerned with changes to religious practices, without taking into consideration changes to **ideas** and/or patterns of thinking. For example, in many studies of religious change, research usually involves a narrow investigation of change in students' religious "orientation." Researchers typically aim to find out whether tertiary education causes a shift in the "religiosity" of students. Religiosity is then measured by such indicators as "orthodoxy, church attendance, and prayer" (see Mol, 1971:87).

By way of example, in one such study by David de Vaus entitled "The Impact of Tertiary Education on Religious Orientation",¹² religious change is evaluated in terms of changes to the students' "religiosity" and "orientation." One of de Vaus's conclusions - that "the majority did not change their religious orientation, some became less religious and others became more religious" (de Vaus, 1985:13) - serves to illustrate my point concerning the use of such terms.

Despite the use of such imprecise terms as "religious orientation", and "less religious", de Vaus's findings provide an invaluable starting and reference point for this study, however. Some of the specific findings that this study intends to examine further are a) that "tertiary education has little impact on the religious orientation of students" (Ibid. p. 19), and b) that "there was little evidence that what people learn at university or college has much impact on their religious orientation" (Ibid. p. 15).

De Vaus then discusses some of the reasons why there appears to be little impact on the religious orientation of students. The first, he says, is because students are not impacted by the ideas they encounter. He argues, for example, that “most students do not take the intellectual ideas prevalent at university seriously enough to let them challenge deeply held beliefs” (Ibid. p. 15).

The second reason for little impact, according to de Vaus, is that “university...does not often lead to a radical transformation of a person's social context, especially the types of people with whom they identify” (Ibid. p. 19).

De Vaus's findings, while contributing valuable insight into the shift of religious orientation in Western university students has shortcomings, then, for several reasons. First, the study typically defines “religiosity” narrowly, and uses indicators such as “orthodoxy”, church attendance and prayer to determine whether “religiosity” has changed. These indicators are useful for measuring certain religious **behaviour**, but may not be useful for measuring changes in religious consciousness, commitments and attitudes. One can alter one's behaviour for numerous reasons without actually altering religious commitment and attitude. Pragmatic decision-making may be no indication of religious change. And second, the research is concerned only with Western students.

This study addresses **ideational** change among Muslim students, an area largely neglected in contemporary research, and focuses on change to the Islamic worldviews of Muslims, rather than a change in “religiosity”, allowing for a much more detailed glimpse into religious experience in contemporary society. A discussion of the importance of examining religious change from the perspective of “worldview” change will now follow.

Defining the Theoretical Approach

Given the aim of this study to isolate ideational change among Muslim students and to examine that change in the light of the claims of the Westernisation and secularisation theses, a theoretical approach was needed that could accommodate an analysis on both a micro and macro level while remaining focused on changes to ideas. The approach considered most appropriate for this task is an approach often employed in the disciplines of religious studies¹³ and cultural anthropology¹⁴ called “worldview analysis” (Smart,

1987:10). The study of a culture's worldview¹⁵ involves an analysis of "the sum of ideas which an individual in a group and/or that group have of the universe in and around them."¹⁶ As Andrew Hofferger explains, "Underlying all that we think, say, or do are basic assumptions that form what we call a 'world view'. A person's world view is the collection of his presuppositions or convictions about reality, which represents his total outlook on life" (Hofferger, 1986:ix).

James W. Sire defines worldview as a set of presuppositions (or assumptions) which we hold (consciously or unconsciously) about the basic make up of our world (Sire, 1988:17). Although the term has been in use for some time in academia - and may even be out of fashion in some circles - its importance should not be overlooked in the study of culture and religion, and is a useful tool for discerning the ways people view the world they live in.¹⁷ Smart explains,

The modern study of religion helps to illuminate worldviews, both traditional and secular, which are such an engine of social and moral continuity and change; and therefore it explores beliefs and feelings, and tries to understand what exists inside the heads of people. What people believe is an important aspect of reality, whether or not what they believe is true (Smart, 1983:1).

This study, then, is concerned with how worldviews develop dynamically in interaction both with others and with other forces.

Worldview analysis at was considered a suitable theoretical approach for a number of reasons. First, it has the ability to examine and contribute to both a study of culture and a study of religion and religious change. There are certainly many theoretical frameworks that could contribute important insights to a study of one or the other, or even to particular aspects of both; Ethnography, Social Psychology, Acculturation, Cultural Anthropology, Religious Studies and Sociology just to name a few. Given that this study incorporates both a study of culture and religion, however, and given that I am using a philosophical approach to the analysis of change in those areas (that is, that both religion and culture can be viewed as systems of **ideas**) it was felt that worldview analysis would provide the best approach to the data.

Second, the term worldview is used extensively as an analytical framework in religious studies because it encompasses not only the study of religion, but also of ideas, perceptions and beliefs in general. While worldview is closely tied to religion, the two are not identical.

A worldview provides people with their basic assumptions about reality; religion provides them with the specific content of this reality.

Third, given that Islam is both a religion and an ideology, a theoretical framework was required that would not draw a sharp line between religious ideas and non-religious ideas, between religion and ideology. Worldview analysis provides for a wide scope of inquiry, an important consideration, given that this study examines diverse areas from religious beliefs, perceptions and ideas, to cultural and moral values, attitudes, Westernisation and secularisation. Since the English language does not have a term to refer to both traditional religions and ideologies, I shall use worldview as Smart does, to refer to both religion and ideology (see Smart, 1983:2; 1987:108).

And fourth, worldview analysis contributes important tools for the study of a people's "consciousness." While the study of worldviews often overlap areas of examination familiar to the study of consciousness - such as the study of an individual's ideas, concepts and perceptions of 'reality' and the world around them - worldview analysis allows for a broader scope of inquiry than a study of consciousness alone. As Smart explains, "consciousness is shaped not only by the experiences an individual has within a specific social context, but also by the worldview that individual holds." While it is important, therefore, to explore, "the geography of human consciousness" (Smart, 1983:6), worldview analysis facilitates not only the study of consciousness, but beliefs and practices as well. He writes, "In a word, belief, consciousness, and practice are bound together" (Smart, 1987:6).

In summary, this chapter has attempted to identify and discuss some of the main gaps and shortcomings of studies to date on change among university students in the West. The three main gaps and shortcomings addressed by this review included a) the paucity of research on Muslim university students in the West, b) the failure of some studies to consider the role that intellectual change may play in the experiences of foreign university students in the West, and c) the need to examine ideational change as an important part of cultural change.

In an examination of a range literature focusing on the experiences of both local and foreign students at universities in the West, this review concludes that ideational change

among Muslim students in the West is an important - though largely unresearched – area of academic inquiry, that “cultural” and “religious” change can/and should be examined from the perspective of changes to ideas and patterns of thought, and that worldview analysis is an appropriate and effective method for examining those changes.³

1. Quoted from a paper presented by Wahid at a conference on "Islam, Modernity and Globalization" at Monash University in Victoria, 1995.

2. See Diana Thorpe, "Overseas Students Flock to Our Unis", The Australian, September 29, 1999.

3. Encyclopedia of Sociology, 1990, p. 409.

4. *Ibid.* p. 409.

5. See J.P. Dupuy, & J. Robert, La Trahison de L'Opulence, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1976. (quoted in The Westernisation of the World, p. 39).

6. See Andrew Milner, Contemporary Cultural Theory, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1991; Peter Jackson, Maps of Meaning, Unwin Hyman, London, 1989; R. Wuthnow, Meaning and Moral Order: Explorations in Cultural Analysis, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1987; and Steve Baron, "The Study of Culture: Cultural Studies and British Sociology Compared", Acta Sociologica, 28 (2), 1985.

7. See Peter Jackson, Maps of Meaning. Jackson writes, "The concept of ideology...is central to cultural studies, referring to the processes through which dominant meanings are imposed, negotiated and registered" (p. 3). See also Reading Human Geography. "At its most general, 'ideology' usually means a system of meaning and belief, but in a more particular sense it directs attention to the two-way traffic between ideas and the world" (p. 508). See also Evon Vogt, "Culture Change", International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 3, 1968, p 554. Vogt noted that Weber (1922) emphasised the importance of "religious ideology" in examining culture change.

8. See F. Lewins, "Ethics, Beliefs and Social Behaviour", Bioethics for Health Professionals, Macmillan Education Australia, 1995. Lewins writes that there is a "spurious relationship between ideas and behaviour" (p. 62), and, as a result, "the often taken for granted assumption that beliefs are the obvious explanation of behaviour is, at best, uncritical and, at worst, often wrong." He explains that while "we take for granted what people say and assume that they do what they say" (p. 56), "beliefs are not, or are not always the cause of associated behaviour" (p. 54).

There are five broad relationships between beliefs and behaviour, according to Lewins:

- a) Beliefs influence social behaviour.
- b) Social behaviour determines beliefs - beliefs are the product of a particular behavioural setting.
- c) Social behaviour determines beliefs, which in turn act back on that behaviour.
- d) Spurious relationship between ideas and behaviour.
- e) Ideas and behaviour are not causally related but are really facets of the same social event.

9. See A.F. Furnham, "The Adjustment of Foreign Students", Higher Education Review, Vol. 26, Number 1, Autumn 1993.

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10. See Ahmed Othman Altwajri, "Academic Freedom in Islam and the West: A Study of the Philosophical Foundations of Academic Freedom in "Islam and the Western Liberal Philosophy", unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Oregon, 1983.
11. See Omar Mohamed Zentani, "Impact of Educational Experience in the United States on Muslim Students", Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1986.
12. Journal of Christian Education, Papers 84, November 1985, pp. 9-20.
13. See Ninian Smart, Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1983. Other important books by Smart include, Religion and the Western Mind, Macmillan, London, 1987; Concept and Empathy, Macmillan, London 1986; A Theory of Religious and Ideological Change, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1984; Beyond Ideology: Religion and the Future of Western Civilization, Collins London, 1981; The Long Search, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1977; The Religious Experience of Mankind, Second Edition, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1976.
14. For a discussion of "worldviews" and cultural anthropology see the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 15-17 pp. 576-579.
15. See Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs, 1983. A person's "worldview" not only shapes the way that individual views the world, but also provides him/her with a framework for attributing meaning to the flow of history and life in general, for interpreting events that occur in the world, and for deriving principles for daily living. Smart writes, "From one perspective the different worldviews are maps of how to live" (p. 61). Smart continues, "The heart of the modern study of religion is the analysis and comparison of worldviews" (p. 4). Following Smart's definition, then, a Muslim is a person who is committed to an Islamic worldview, a Buddhist is an individual who ascribes to a Buddhist worldview, a Christian is an individual who ascribes to a Christian (Biblical) worldview, etcetera.
16. International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 15-17, p. 576.
17. Or, in the words of other writers, their "interpretation of reality" (Mol, 1971:302), "architecture of thought" (Latouche, 1996:61), or "contours of thought and behaviour" (Mandelbaum, 1968:314).

CHAPTER FOUR

EXAMINING WESTERNISATION

Westernisation is a theoretical perspective or paradigm commonly used today by writers seeking to analyse and explain a broad range of social, political and cultural change in the contemporary non-Western world (von Laue, 1987; Latouche, 1996; King, 1988; Darling, 1979). Despite a very superficial level of agreement concerning the meaning of the term, however, providing an exact definition of Westernisation is a difficult task, a situation that this researcher feels must be addressed, and one that only adds to the importance and relevance of this thesis.

The aims of this chapter are a) to illustrate some of the theoretical and methodological issues associated with examining the Westernisation thesis, and b) to outline the approach this study takes in an exploration of Westernisation among Muslim university students in the West.

Some Methodological and Theoretical Issues

1) The Problem of Definition

One of the problems researchers face in examining the Westernisation thesis is that there is currently no comprehensive definition for it. Despite its wide use, the term still has a variety of meanings; indeed, there seems to be no standard definition throughout the Muslim world, nor in the West itself. For example, to researchers interested in *political* Westernisation (say, in Asia, for example), issues such as the impact of Western political forms and structures are salient. Terms like democracy, parliament, and even elections, for example, are all rooted in Western concepts of government. In many parts of the Muslim world, therefore, one encounters political structures that are Western, but attitudes and beliefs that are not.

To others interested in aspects of *social* Westernisation (in the Islamic world, for example), the issues of Western clothing (such as blue jeans) on Muslim girls in Afghanistan, or American movies and television programs in villages in Pakistan provide the focus for research. And to those interested in the *economic* aspects of Westernisation, the issues of

trade imbalance, the monopolies of Western multinational companies in the Islamic world, or the Western control of oil prices in the Middle East provide the basis for discussion and debate.

It seems clear, then, that Westernisation is a multi-faceted process. Indeed, Westernisation can mean different things to different people, and its meaning may even change over time. In order to gain a clearer understanding of what exactly Westernisation is, and what it entails, I will briefly illustrate some of the meanings it is given, and the ways it is used by several prominent writers.

One author, Theodore von Laue, for example, in his book The World Revolution of Westernisation,¹ argues that Westernisation has been a process that has defined and directed the whole world's development.² The Third world in particular - which means much of the Islamic world - has been forcibly "reculturated"³ to Western values, he says, a process that has "subverted", "undermined", and "humiliated" them (von Laue, 1987:4-5).⁴

Another, Serge Latouche, in a sweeping account of global social and cultural "Westernisation",⁵ argues that Westernisation is a "cultural invasion"⁶ which involves the "standardising of the mind" (Latouche, 1996:3-4), and the "destruction of all traditional structures, economic, social or mental" (Ibid. p. 76). This occurs, Latouche argues, because Westernisation imposes a "uniformity of lifestyles" (Ibid. p. 17), instils in cultures the value of "individualism" (Ibid. p. 15), and fosters a "mental outlook" towards "the value of progress" (Ibid. p. 17).

For Frank Darling, writing specifically about Asia,⁷ Westernisation is defined and evaluated in terms of the "impact"⁸ and "influence" of Western culture upon non-Western societies. He writes,

The impact of Western culture on the highly diversified societies of Asia constitutes one of the most significant interactions between different civilisations in human history. Beginning in the final years of the fifteenth century and increasing in scope and vigour into the twentieth century, Western influences imparted a stimulus which permanently altered the purpose and functions of virtually all societies in Asia (Darling, 1979:xvii).

Some of the "Western" cultural features Darling argues were imparted to Asian societies include 1) "values",⁹ 2) "modes of behaviour",¹⁰ and 3) "institutions."¹¹

Others who describe the influence of "Westernisation" in various non-Western societies include Esposito (1988) and Muzaffar (1986). Esposito explains that Westernisation involves the "subversion" of traditional Islamic culture in much of the Muslim world. The values and/or ideas he says result from this process include secularism, materialism and spiritual bankruptcy. He explains,

Western models of political, social and economic development were criticised as imported transplants that had failed, fostering continued political and cultural dependence on the West and resulting in secularism, materialism, and spiritual bankruptcy (Esposito, 1988:166).

In addition, Esposito argues that Westernisation involves the adoption of a Western "lifestyle" with its "institutions, values, dress and music", and that in the Islamic world this was increasingly viewed as a threat to cultural identity and the cause of "moral and spiritual malaise" (Esposito, 1988:166).

Muzaffar, too, is worried about the cultural threat Westernisation poses to Islamic societies, and particularly the influence that "Western thought" brings, with its "emphasis on secularised, relativistic values" (Muzaffar, 1986:21). For Muzaffar, the process of Westernisation is considered in Malaysia, for example, to be a serious challenge to Islamic values and the Islamic worldview (Ibid. p. 21).

It is clear from the arguments of these writers, then, that although Westernisation is considered to be a multi-faceted global process that continues to influence non-Western cultures in numerous ways and in varying degrees in the contemporary world, it can/and does mean many different things, and can be described in a variety of ways.

2) The Problem of Focus

A second problem researchers face in attempting to examine Westernisation is that there appear to be two aspects to the process: the objective, and the subjective, or personal. Examining Westernisation empirically is problematic unless these two aspects are considered separately. Referring back to the discussion above, for example, it is clear that for von Laue, Westernisation is an all-encompassing process, affecting not only individuals, and the way they think, but also cultures, and indeed whole societies (including the institutions in them). Latouche too argues that Westernisation is a global process that has

affected - and continues to affect - not only individuals and their "mental outlook", but also societies, cultures and institutions.

Darling is another who identifies Westernisation with "behaviour", "values", and "institutions" - including both objective and subjective aspects - and Esposito explains that Islamic cultures are Westernised not only through political economic and social structures (the objective aspect), but through Western lifestyles and values as well (the subjective aspect).

3) The Problem of Scope

A third problem researchers face in examining the Westernisation thesis is the problem of scope. Given that the concept of personal or subjective Westernisation itself appears to have two aspects (that is, the "external" - behaviour, lifestyle, clothing, etcetera, and the "ideational" - consciousness, patterns of thought, modes of thinking etcetera) researchers must distinguish conceptually and methodologically between these two in order to be clear about what is being examined.

In sum, the three problems I have identified facing researchers interested in examining the Westernisation thesis are, 1) theoretical (the problems of definition), 2) conceptual (the problem of focus), and 3) methodological (the problem of scope). From this researcher's perspective, however, the problems of examining the Westernisation process are not insurmountable if one is able to define what Westernisation means for each area of inquiry where it is said to be (or said not to be) taking place, conceptually able to make a clear distinction between the Westernisation of individuals and the Westernisation of society, and methodologically able to distinguish between the external (behavioural) and ideational aspects of personal Westernisation. The approach of this study takes all three into account.

Approach of This Study

It is apparent from the lack of literature on this subject that few writers have tackled the difficult issue of examining the impact of Westernisation empirically.¹² This study, therefore, is treading very much in uncharted territory. None-the-less, this study intends to begin the process of "mapping out" some of this territory by adopting the following approach.

The first feature of the approach of this study is in its conceptual framework, in that my general interest is in what it means to say that *individuals* have become (or are becoming) culturally "Westernised" (as compared to what it means to say that a given *society* has become "Westernised"). The general focus of this study, then, is on the subjective or personal aspect of cultural Westernisation. And in more specific terms - given that the term "culture" can have many meanings, and refer to a whole range of activities, ideas, beliefs, symbols and behaviour¹³ - this study focuses on what it means for Muslim individuals to become Westernised in terms of their moral ideas and values.

The second feature of the approach of this study is in its methodology, in that my primary objective is to examine personal Westernisation on the *ideational* level. This study seeks to know whether Westernisation occurs on the level of consciousness, or patterns of thought, and if so what some of the basic features/characteristics of a "Westernised" mind are. As Latouche has argued, Westernisation affects not only the objective realm, but the ideational as well, and he argues that "We need to look at attitudes of mind to realise how successful Westernisation has been" (Latouche, 1996:2).

And the third feature of the approach of this study is in its definition of Westernisation. In order to provide a working definition of what it means to become "Westernised" (in terms of patterns of thought), it is first of all important to A) define the "West", and B) illustrate some of the philosophical features of a typically "Western" mindset.

A) The West defined

For the purposes of this study, I shall make use of the following definition of the West. On the *geographical* level, the "Western world" refers to a triangle containing the Northern Hemisphere: Western Europe, Japan and the United States. It also includes nations like Australia (Latouche, 1996:27).

On the *philosophical* level, however, the Western world also refers to a set of ideas (worldview) that undergirds, maintains, and directs the development of Western culture. Ahmad, for example, writes that "the West is no longer a mere geographic proposition, it has also developed cultural and civilisational dimensions" (Ahmad, 1995:64). And Hall adds

that "clearly, 'the West' is as much an idea as a fact of geography" (Hall & Gieben, 1992:276).

B) Some features of a contemporary Western mindset

Some of the salient features of a contemporary Western worldview (from this researcher's perspective) include:

B.1 Naturalism

In the Western world, up to the beginning of the eighteenth century, the theistic worldview was clearly dominant.¹⁴ Sire writes, "People rarely challenged the existence of God, or held that reality was impersonal, or that death meant individual extinction" (Sire, 1988:24). This of course is no longer true in reference to the Western world. According to Sire, Naturalism is perhaps the most prevalent worldview in the West today (see Sire, 1988:62-83).

Naturalism is a worldview which explains everything on the basis of impersonal natural causes that account for all of reality. There is no God, no Creator.

Naturalism is closely allied to the scientific method. Such a method, when adopted as one's model for reality, views the universe as a uniform system based strictly on the cause-and-effect relationships between its various parts. In this view, there is no room for the supernatural. Thus history, according to Sire, becomes a "linear system of events linked by cause and effect but without an overarching purpose" (Ibid. p.68)

B.2 Secularism

Allied with naturalism, secularism is the view that religion is primarily a personal matter, and has little, if anything, to do with the operation of society. In the West, many would hold that religion is simply a matter of personal preference. Beyer explains,

Since the mid 1960's at least, many sociologists¹⁵ have argued that religion in the contemporary Western world has become increasingly privatised...that traditional religion was now primarily the concern of the individual and had therefore lost much of its 'public' relevance (Beyer, 1990:373).

Many of the other ideas that have shaped - and continue to shape - the philosophical foundations of the West owe their origin to the Enlightenment. It is generally accepted that the Enlightenment, which refers to "a period in European intellectual history which spans the time from roughly the first quarter to the last quarter of the eighteenth century"

(Hamilton, 1992:24), played a major role in the formation of the philosophical foundations of the contemporary Western world (Ibid. pp. 24-45). Although there were many aspects to it, "in its simplest sense", Hamilton argues, "the Enlightenment was the creation of a new framework of ideas about man, society and nature, which challenged existing conceptions rooted in a traditional world view, dominated by (traditional forms of) Christianity" (Ibid. p. 23). Some of the central ideas of the Enlightenment (from the perspective of this study) include:

B.3 "A scepticism towards traditional authority in matters of religion and politics" (Scruton, 1982:149). As Scruton explains, "The Enlightenment was prodigious of political theory, much of it liberal, universalist, secular, and anti-authoritarian" (Ibid. p.149). Hamilton writes that Enlightenment thinkers were "virulent" anti-clerics, who were "opposed to traditional religious authority" in particular, and who stressed the need "for secular knowledge free of religious orthodoxies" (Hamilton, 1992:22).

B.4 A shift towards reason, away from religion, "to a world" writes Bocoock "which could only be understood and explained through the application of rational forms of explanation" (Bocoock, 1992:261).¹⁶ This new respect for reason resulted in "the spread of instrumental rationality to every sphere of life" (Ibid. p. 266).¹⁷

B.5 A shift to Humanism as a foundation and reference point for moral ideas and values. As Scruton explains, Humanism "emphasises man not only as the sole but also the sufficient source of all values" (Scruton, 1982:209).¹⁸ And for humanism, "the moral atheist is the type of the enlightened man" (Ibid. p. 209). Some of the moral values and ideas emphasised by humanism include:

B.5.1 Moral relativism

As Colson explains, "Moral relativism is a view that if nature is all there is, then there is no transcendent source of moral truth, and we are left to construct morality on our own. Every principle is reduced to a personal preference" (Colson, 1999:21).

B.5.2 Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism views moral action in terms of its utility, and utility in terms of whether something helps to produce human happiness or to reduce human suffering.¹⁹

B.5.3 Human happiness, and fulfilment.

As moral reasoning during the Enlightenment moved away from a religious foundation, happiness, prosperity and fulfilment - not obedience to the will of God - became the primary focus of human endeavour.

B.5.4 Liberty and personal freedom.

Emphasising personal freedom often results in an opposition to "traditional constraints on beliefs...social interaction...and sexuality" (Hamilton, 1992:22). Humanism favours liberty, a liberal outlook, and democratic institutions.

B.5.5 Progress.

This notion contains within it the idea that "the human social condition could be improved by the application of science and reason, and would result in an ever-increasing level of happiness and well-being" (Hamilton, 1992:21).²⁰

B.5.6 Individualism

Central to individualism is the idea that "the individual is the starting point for all knowledge and action, and that individual reason cannot be subjected to a higher authority" (Hamilton, 1992:22). Individualism prioritises the needs and desires of individuals, rather than the welfare of the community and society.²¹

B.5.7 Toleration and equality

Individuals who hold these values believe that diverse viewpoints and perspectives should be treated equally, because "all human beings are essentially the same, despite their religious or moral convictions" (Hamilton, 1992:22).

B.6 A belief in Science.

As Bocoock explains, "The Enlightenment thinkers had hoped that science could replace religion as a basis for moral values, and thus provide the foundation for a new culture, a modern civilisation" (Bocoock, 1992:258-259). Through a belief in science, individuals often maintained "that scientific knowledge, based upon the experimental method...was the key to expanding all human knowledge", and that science "was a vehicle that would move human society onwards and upwards to a more enlightened and progressive state" (Hamilton, 1992:21).

B.6.1 The idea of Universalism

As Hamilton explains, Universalism was the belief, "that reason and science could be applied to any and every situation, and that their principles were the same in every situation.

Science, in particular, was believed to be able to deduce general laws which govern the entire universe, without exception” (Hamilton, 1992:21).

From the perspective of this study, then, the Enlightenment was an important era, making a profound contribution to the philosophical and moral foundation of the contemporary West today.

This study also utilises the perspective of Frank Darling who echoes many of the ideas and concepts in the above list, and adds some others. According to Darling, some typical "Western" ideas include:

- 1) The concept of "progress", which entails the acceptance of the values of "secularism", "achievement", and "change."
- 2) The concept of "equality" which entails the acceptance of "individualism" and "achievement."
- 3) The concept of "ideological pluralism", which entails the acceptance of "universalism", "diversity", "tolerance" and "consensus."
- 4) The concept of "expanded cultural pluralism", which entails the acceptance of the values of "individual freedom", "tolerance", "compromise" and "consensus" (see Darling, 1979:443-445).

Given that most (if not all) of the above ideas and values would be considered an integral part of today's Western worldview and culture, to become more "Western", then, would be to adopt some, or all of the above.²²

In order to understand more clearly what it means for Muslim students to become Westernised, it is also important to briefly outline some of the features of a contemporary Islamic mindset.

C) Some features of a contemporary Islamic mindset.

Bearing in mind the sobering criticism of Edward Said regarding the potential "Orientalism"²³ of non-Muslims, it is with some caution that I now embark upon this next task of identifying and listing some of the salient features (from the perspective of this study) of an Islamic worldview. The following list is not meant to be an exhaustive account

of the features of an Islamic mindset. Indeed, many would argue that such a task is impossible anyway, given the diversity of perspectives on Islam, even within the Islamic world itself. The following features are intended, therefore, to be illustrative of some of the main aspects of an Islamic worldview. They are presented here as an initial starting point for discussion, and also as a reference point for this study.

Some of the features of an Islamic mindset would include:

C.1 Theism, not Naturalism.

Islamic societies are what Frank Darling calls "Sacred-Oriented Cultural Systems."²⁴ In this view religion constitutes the dominant social force of the cultural system, and produces "an intense affinity toward an otherworldly deity or spirit induced social and political behaviour" (Darling, 1979:5). Muslims believe that God (Allah) works to bring the world into conformity with his will and intentions for man. In this view, history is linear, has both meaning and direction, and man, as Allah's vice-regent on Earth, is called to "build and cultivate life in all its aspects; spiritual, social and physical, on the basis of God's laws and instructions conveyed through the prophets" (Altwajiri, 1983:79) to bring about the fulfilment of God's purposes for humanity.

C.2 No secular/sacred dichotomy.

Unlike the West, which accepts the notion of a "secular" and a "sacred" realm, which have nothing to do with each other, Islam recognises no division between religious principles and civil/social principles.²⁵ As Muzaffar explains,

When all is said and done, we have no choice but to admit that Islam, as an ideology and a culture, is very different from secular Western civilisation. Islam, it is true, contradicts the basic postulates of the secular civilisation that rose out of the Europe of the Enlightenment (Muzaffar, 1994:121).

In Islam, the principles of the Qur'an apply equally to all areas of life including the subjective (personal morality) and objective realms (politics, economics, law etc.). God is thus the reference point for both individual and society. Umar explains,

The ideological worldview of Islam is based on the concept of Tauhid. Its essence is that God is One and only One (Q 112:1-4), man shall submit to God alone (Q 6:14); not only man but in fact the entire Universe (Q 3:83); God alone is the Truth (Q 20:114) and, in a word, God alone is the Ultimate Reference of all things (Q 3:109).

Now, since God alone is the Ultimate Reference of all things, and since man and the entire universe should submit to God alone, it follows logically that in Islam there

can be no division between sacred and secular, and that any attempt to demarcate any aspect whatsoever of man's existence, or in the entire universe for that matter, in which God will not be the Ultimate Reference will, of necessity negate Islam from its ideological base. Islam has a system of its own. To secularise Islam would, in fact, be an exercise in de-Islamisation (Umar, 1988:91).

C.3 Honour and respect for traditional religious authorities.

C.4 Use of revelation (Holy Qur'an), aided by reason, for understanding and explaining the world we live in. Islam rejects empiricism - the idea that all thought and knowledge about the natural and social world must be based upon empirical facts, things that all humans can apprehend through their senses. Although reason is important, Islam teaches that revelation, not reason, is the final and absolute source of knowledge. Altwajjri explains that,

Although Islam recognises the empirical method and, in fact, encourages it, it does not give it precedence over revelation, not believe it can or should be applied to all phenomena. Revelation should, and must be considered first in regulating everything (Altwajjri, 1983:110).

C.5 The Qur'an as a foundation and reference point for moral ideas and values. The Qur'an applies to all aspects of life, both personal and community, and is the final authority in all matters of morality. Muslims believe the Qur'an provides comprehensive moral guidelines for every action in the life of a Muslim. It is an unchangeable reference point for not only individual morality, but also for moral reasoning concerning issues in all areas of society (that is, the political, economic, legal, social, etcetera). Kurshid Ahmad writes,²⁶

A distinctive characteristic of Islam is that it is organised, disciplined and a complete way of life. It does not confine its scope only to the private life of a man, rather it caters to all fields of human existence. Islam provides guidance in all walks of life - individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural, national and international (quoted in Altwajjri, 1983:72).

Some of the moral values and ideas emphasised by Islam include:

C.5.1 Moral universals.

Morality is part of the fabric of reality. There are moral universals, which are revealed in the Holy Qur'an. Nudity is never permitted, for example, nor is drinking alcohol or taking drugs.

C.5.2 Justice and mercy defined - Utilitarianism is not acceptable.

C.5.3 Seeking to please God, rather than personal happiness, and fulfilment.

C.5.4 Personal freedom - defined and constrained by God's moral laws.

Man does not have moral autonomy, but rather is accountable to God for everything he does.²⁷

C.5.5 An emphasis on moral obligation, rather than rights.

As Scruton explains, Sharia law "takes the concept of obligation, rather than that of right, as central."²⁸

C.5.6 Progress defined according to Islamic values.

C.5.7 Emphasis on the welfare of the community (The *UMMAH*) over the desires of individuals.²⁹

Individualism is viewed negatively, as Faruqi makes clear.

We are bound by an ideology, and this ideology is Islam. We are not individualists, and we do not promote the values of individualism (Faruqi, 1986:28). We need to learn...to defeat our individualism (Ibid. p. 17).

C.5.8 Importance of the family, and especially the patriarchal family.

Faruqi explains, "the family in Islam is a patriarchal family" (Faruqi, 1986:9).³⁰

C.5.9 Toleration - but not equality - of all viewpoints.

For Muslims, Mohammed is the last or final prophet, the summation and completion of all previous revelations. By definition, then, Islam is the one and only true religion.

While Muslims believe the principles of the Qur'an are absolute, unchangeable and immutable, and are not to be subject to continuous reconsideration, however, they are allowed - and encouraged - to engage in "ijtihad",³¹ which means that the scholar is permitted to formulate a judgement about a particular issue "if it is not directly and unambiguously treated in the Holy Qur'an or the Sunnah" (Altwajiri, 1983:40). Ijtihad is not only legitimate, however, it is compulsory, according to Qadri (1973:253-254) who states,

The Mujtahid is under a personal obligation to exercise Ijtihad in matters concerning himself and is not allowed to follow others' views. When approached on a question, it is an obligation on all Mutjahids, especially the one requested, to give an opinion (Quoted in Altwajiri, 1983:43).

The qualifications that an individual must have before Ijtihad can be undertaken, however, include "knowledge of the Qur'an and the Sunnah", and personal attributes such as "sincerity and piety, among other things" (Altwajiri, 1983:42). And it must be remembered, that Ijtihad should never be exercised in total independence from the Qur'an, and must never contradict any of its clear commands.

C.6 The belief that scientific knowledge, based upon the experimental method, is only one key to expanding human knowledge; the other is revelation (Holy Qur'an).

Bearing the previous discussion in mind, then, I now wish to turn to chapter five for an examination of Westernisation among Muslim university students in Australia.

1. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987.

2. See Chapter 21, "The Burden of Development", for example. von Laue argues that the terms "modernisation" and "development" were defined according to Western ideals. Concerning third world nations beginning to model themselves on these Western ideals he says, "for the newcomers the only alternative to ignominy was going up, up the steep ladder of 'development' as defined by the Western model" (p. 304).

3. von Laue defines "reculturation" as "an unnatural revamping of unsuitable indigenous institutions and human values under pressure to meet alien goals" (p. 5).

4. See The World Revolution of Westernisation. von Laue writes,

The victorious Westerners, their own ways and self-confidence boosted by their worldwide sway, left the rest of the world humiliated and in cultural limbo. Under the Western impact traditional authorities and local customs had no future; they crumbled away. Meanwhile the imported ways of the West remained superficial or even incomprehensible; they did not fit societies whose cultural sovereignty had been crushed (p. 5).

5. See Serge Latouche, The Westernisation of the World, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1996.

6. Latouche writes, "One way cultural currents flooded from the countries of the Centre over the entire planet: images, words, moral values, legal notions, political codes flowed from centres of creation into the Third World through the media (Newspapers, radio, television, films, books, records, video)" (p. 20).

7. See The Westernisation of Asia, G.K. Hall & Co., Boston, Massachusetts, 1979.

8. Darling writes,

The diverse array of Western values, modes of behaviour, and institutions imposed on traditional societies in Asia from the fifteenth century to the end of Western political domination constituted the Western impact.... They comprised vitally important elements in the formation of new values, modes of behaviour, and institutions in the development of modern Asian societies (Darling, 1979:99).

9. Darling identifies the following as Western values:

- "the concept of the Nation-State
- the concept of progress
- the concept of equality
- modernisation
- ideological pluralism

-
- moderate nationalism
 - Liberal and leftist ideologies" (see p. 443).

10. Darling identifies Western "modes of behaviour" imparted to Asian societies as:

- "Expanded cultural pluralism
- Modern urbanisation
- Spread of English Language
- Humanitarian Reforms
- Promotion or performance of scholarly research
- Modernising indigenous entrepreneurial class
- Urban and rural proletariat" (see p. 444).

11. According to Darling, some of the Western institutional ideas that impacted Asia include:

- "Western-oriented institutions of higher education
- Rationalised indigenous bureaucracy
- Constitution Democracy
- Modernised indigenous military forces
- Modern mass media" (see p. 445).

12. Darling laments the (apparent) lack of interest in Westernisation when he says,

A better knowledge of the origin and nature of Western influences is vital in understanding the government and politics of each Asian society. Yet in spite of the extensive Western role in the development of contemporary Asian societies, very few scholars, Asian or western, have sought to analyse and compare the broad forces and movements involved in this important historical process (p. xvii).

13. See, for example, Robert Boccock, "The Cultural Formations of Modern Society", Formations Of Modernity, Stuart Hall & Bram Gieben, eds. Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 229-234.

14. See The Universe Next Door, p. 24.

15. See Thomas Luckmann, The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society, Macmillan, New York, 1967, p. 103. See also Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion, Doubleday, New York, 1967, p. 133f. See also Talcott Parsons, "Religion in a Modern Pluralistic Society", Review of Religious Research, 7:125-46.

16. Hamilton elaborates, saying that the Enlightenment version of rationalism "was closely linked with empiricism...the idea that all thought and knowledge about the natural and social world is based upon empirical facts, things that all humans can apprehend through their senses" (Hamilton, 1992:21).

17. See David Burnett King, The Crisis of Our Time, Associated University Presses, London, 1988. King writes that "the first grand transition in the history of Western thought" was, briefly put,

To move from supernaturalism to rationalism, or said another way, from religion to philosophy...The big change came with the advent of Greek philosophy, which reduced the many supernatural possibilities to a single set of natural rules, with access to these available not through special acts of manipulation, but through reason...The direct approach to the gods and nature was put aside in favour of an effort to operate according to the rules of logic that were now taken to govern the world (p. 70).

Wallis and Bruce add,

Rationalisation involved the pursuit of technically efficient means of securing this-worldly ends. The domain over which religion offered the most compelling explanations and the most predictable outcomes shrank. The growth of technical rationality gradually displaced supernatural influence and moral considerations from ever-wider areas of public life, replacing them by considerations of objective performance and practical expedience (Wallis and Bruce, 1992:14).

And Hans Mol describes the increasing rationalisation of the contemporary West when he writes, "In Australia, as in other Western nations, the ambiguous place of religion reflects the individual/rational value orientations of Western society" (Mol, 1971:301).

18. See Ninian Smart. Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs, 1983. Smart argues that Humanism "believes that the highest values are to be found in human beings and their creations...that there is nothing higher than the human race." He also says that in the West, Humanism is thought to be "scientific", in that "the person who holds to this view believes that all true knowledge about the world is ultimately to be found through science, or at least within the framework of a scientific outlook...there is no room in science for God, or for Nirvana" (p. 53).

19. Ibid. p.96. Smart writes, "Our whole Western culture is drenched with utilitarian thoughts...This utilitarianism is often coupled with the idea, celebrated by the scientific humanist, that the basis of all values is the individual human being, and that what is most important is how individuals relate to one another."

20. One of the effects of the belief in "progress", as defined by the West, was that non-Western societies then defined their own development in Western terms. The result, described by Latouche was that, As soon as the West established progress as the cornerstone of modernity, all the countries, which were victims of its presence, starting with those in its immediate neighbourhood, were affected by an incurable disease, backwardness (Latouche, 1996:69).

21. See H. Markus & Shinobu Kitayama. "Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation", Psychological Review, 98, (2), 1991. Markus and Kitayama argue, for example, that "in many Western cultures, there is a faith in the inherent separateness of distinct persons. The normative imperative of this culture is to become independent from others and to discover and express one's unique attributes" (p. 226). In achieving this independent construal of the self, Westerners assert that this requires, "constructing oneself as an individual whose behaviour is organised and made meaningful primarily by reference to one's own internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings, and action, rather than by reference to the thoughts feelings and actions of others" (p. 226).

22. Several writers define Westernisation as...

"Those past and present cultural, political, religious, and socio-economic factors from Europe and North America that determine or facilitate ways of thinking, feeling, and acting consonant with those cultures" (Fortner, 1993:14).

"The values, behaviour and institutions induced by specific Western influences" (Darling, 1979:xxi).

"The importation of customs and institutions thought to be characteristic of 'the West'" (Scruton, 1982:493).

23. See Edward Said. Orientalism, Vintage Books, New York, 1979.

24. See Frank Darling. The Westernisation of Asia. In contrast, the West, according to Darling, is a "Secular-Oriented Cultural System", which produces "A worldly and pragmatic orientation induced the basic social and political norms of the secular-oriented cultural systems. The predominant collective attitude in these societies was focused on mundane and earthly objects. Social relationships and political authority were defined in a secular doctrine or value system" (p. 5).

25. See Henry Munson Jr. Islam and Revolution in the Middle East, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1988. Munson Writes, "one of the principal shibboleths of the fundamentalist Islamic literature is that Islam encompasses all aspects of life, and that the idea of a secular state and society is therefore contrary to the laws of God" (Munson, 1988:109).

26. K. Ahmad. Islam: An Introduction, Begum Aisha Bawani Waqf, Karachi, n.d.

27. See John L. Esposito, The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995. Esposito explains that in the view of many Muslims, "the Western concept of freedom fosters moral and social corruption" (p. 24).

28. See A Dictionary of Political Thought, p. 236.

29. See Ninian Smart, Religion and the Western Mind, 1987. Smart explains, "there is a degree to which the Islamic countries identify themselves in terms of an underlying Islamic civilisation: and this contrasts with the West where the consciousness is more of modernity and freedom than of an underlying Christian civilisation" (p. 86). See also Osman Bakar. "Islam's Destiny: A Bridge Between East and West", in Australian Muslim News, Vol. 2, Issue 17, Nov 1996. Bakar writes,

In Islam, civilisational consciousness is deeply rooted in the Qur'anic ideas as common ancestry, common humanity, universal goodness of the human being, universality of divine favours to the human race, the wisdom of ethnic and cultural pluralism, intercultural cooperation in the pursuit of the common good for all human kind, global social justice and a common responsibility for the protection of planet Earth.

Civilisation-consciousness is to be inculcated and nurtured on the foundation of these fundamental cultural and civilisational ideas...it means that Islam is very much interested in the idea of a universal civilisation...All the foundational elements of civilisation-consciousness emphasised by the Qur'an just mentioned, smack not of particularism, but rather of universalism...Islam will continue to believe in and argue and struggle for a universal civilisation as a desirable goal...doctrinally and essentially speaking, Islam is the most universal of all civilisations.

The Qur'an emphasises corporate solidarity so that Muslims everywhere speak of being part of a great Muslim brotherhood of men of many nations (the *Ummah*). Abdul Masih makes this point clear when he states that "most Arabs are still not conscious of an independent 'I' but have lived rooted in the 'we' of the clan. This is one of the biggest differences between the East and the West" (Masih, 1974:13).

30. Faruqi explains that for Muslims,

Our modern family is an extended family, it is not a nuclear family (consisting only of husband, wife and children)...this tendency (of the nuclear family) is gripping the whole Muslim world...every person who gets married wants to go and live in a flat of his own, avoiding his relatives...This is a terrible development, this is the Westernisation and the corruption that we are subjected to, that we are undergoing in our lives in the West (Faruqi, 1986:15).

And he adds that,

"Of course, the first career of a Muslim woman is her family" (Ibid. p.18).

31. "Ijtihad" is a derivation of the Arabic verb "ijtihad", which literally means to exert oneself.

CHAPTER FIVE

MUSLIM EXPERIENCES IN THE WEST: MORAL CHALLENGES AND CHANGES

Moral ideas and values form an important part of an individual's worldview (Smart, 1983; Noebel, 1991; Hoffecker, 1986). In the contemporary world, as globalisation and migration bring cultures with different worldview traditions into increasing contact with each other, challenges and changes can - and do - occur to the moral ideas and values of individuals in these cultures. As Muslim students continue to come to the West to study, important questions are raised concerning the influence that living in a non-Islamic culture has on their Islamic moral ideas and values. Akbar Ahmed, for example, raises the question of how Muslim students manage in the "cultural uncertainties of...poly-ethnic situations" (Ahmed, 1994:4). Another important question concerns whether, and if so to what extent, Muslims experience what Seyyed Nasr calls the "tension between Islam and the ethos of modern Western civilisation" (Nasr, 1980:8).

In his book The World Revolution of Westernisation, Theodore von Laue addresses questions like these, arguing that in the interaction between Western and non-Western cultures, the non-Western (including Islamic) cultures become increasingly "Westernised", as "the most refined principles of Western society" are implanted in them (von Laue, 1987:333), and that this process represents nothing less than a "reculturation along Western lines" (Ibid. p.334). Muhammad Asad, too, is aware of the powerful influence of Western culture and, in his book Islam at the Crossroads,¹ adds a warning that the Western "mode of life" poses one of the most serious threats ever to the survival of the Islamic world itself. He argues that "The imitation...individually and socially...of the Western mode of life by Muslims is undoubtedly the greatest danger for the existence...of Islamic civilisation" (Asad, 1975:101). And Ahmed agrees, arguing that "Muslims appear more threatened than ever before, and unable to cope with the cultural onslaught of the West" (Ahmed, 1991:29).

Samuel Huntington, on the other hand, argues that many non-Western societies (including those that are Islamic), for example, can, and do resist pressures to adopt Western notions² and values, because (quoting a review of 100 comparative studies of values in different societies) "the values

that are most important in the West", are viewed as "least important worldwide" (Huntington, 1993:41).³

The general aim of this chapter is to address the question of the influence of Western culture upon the moral ideas and values of Muslim university students in contemporary society. This chapter will show that a select group of Muslim university students responded to the social and moral environment of the West in a number of different ways, and for a variety of reasons. For some, living in the West presented an opportunity to reaffirm their Islamic heritage and recommit themselves to their own Islamic moral values. For others, living in the West presented an opportunity to re-examine their own moral notions, values, and basis for moral decision-making, and to readjust their moral perspectives in various ways. While for others, living in the West presented an opportunity to abandon traditional moral reference points, and to adopt - albeit in varying degrees - some of the moral values and perspectives of the West.

The three specific aims of this chapter are:

- 1) To examine in detail the nature and extent of changes to the moral *foundation, values* or *ideals* of Muslim students living in a Western cultural setting.
- 2) To analyse some of the reasons why students responded to the moral environment of the West in the way they did, and illustrate some of the themes and patterns visible in their responses.
- 3) To consider whether the Westernisation thesis is a valid and suitable framework for explaining the moral changes that have occurred.

Muslim responses to the moral foundation, ideas and values of the West cannot be understood without first coming to understand some of the moral ideas and values prevalent in the contemporary Western world today. This chapter begins, therefore, with a brief overview of some of the features of the moral foundation of the contemporary West, together with some of the ideas, and values that flow from it.

The Moral Context of the West

Moral ideas and values represent what an individual believes is the "right" or "good" thing to do in any given situation (Noebel, 1991:193). Moral reasoning requires a reference point, or foundation upon which an individual constructs notions of moral values and ideals. Values and

morals are closely linked. One of the most important historical (and indeed ongoing) debates that has shaped the moral values and ideas of the contemporary West, centres on what the foundation or reference point for moral values and moral reasoning should be. As Max Hocutt explains,

The fundamental question of ethics is who makes the rules? God or men? The theistic answer is that God makes them. The humanistic answer is that men make them. This distinction between theism and humanism is the fundamental division in moral theory (Hocutt, 1980:137).

Although religion has contributed - and continues to contribute - important insights and perspectives to the moral values and ideas in the contemporary West, it is the humanistic answer to the above question of the origin of moral values that appears to predominate today. This situation may owe much to the contribution of the Enlightenment to the moral foundation, ideas and values of the contemporary West today. I will now revisit the discussion of the central ideas of the Enlightenment from chapter four, and list those ideas - in abbreviated form - that this study makes use of as indicators of the process of "Westernisation."

As Peter Hamilton describes it, the Enlightenment generally refers to "a period in European intellectual history which spans the time from roughly the first quarter to the last quarter of the eighteenth century" (Hamilton, 1992:24). Although there were many aspects to it, "in its simplest sense", Hamilton continues, "the Enlightenment was the creation of a new framework of ideas about man, society and nature, which challenged existing conceptions rooted in a traditional world view, dominated by (traditional forms of) Christianity" (Ibid. p. 23).

Some of the central ideas of the Enlightenment that this study intends to use as indicators of the process of "Westernisation" include:

- 1) An increasing scepticism towards traditional religious authorities (Scruton, 1982:149).⁴
- 2) A shift towards reason, away from religion for understanding and explaining the world we live in (Scruton, 1982:261).⁵
- 3) A shift to humanism as a foundation and reference point for moral ideas and values.⁶ Some of the moral values and ideas emphasised by humanism include:

3.1 Moral relativism.⁷

3.2 Utilitarianism.⁸

3.1 Personal happiness, and fulfilment.⁹

3.2 Liberty and personal freedom.¹⁰

3.3 Progress.¹¹

3.4 Individualism.¹²

3.5 Toleration and equality of all viewpoints.¹³

- 4) The belief that scientific knowledge, based upon the experimental method, is the key to expanding **all** human knowledge.¹⁴

From the perspective of this study, then, the Enlightenment was an important era, making a significant contribution to the moral foundation, ideas and values of the contemporary West today. Most (if not all) of the above ideas and values would be considered an integral part of today's Western culture. To become more "Western", then, would be to adopt some or all of the above ideas and/or values.¹⁵ Bearing this in mind, I now wish to turn to the research findings to determine whether, and if so to what extent, Muslims did become "Westernised" during their time in the West.

Findings of the Study

Despite the fact that student experiences in the West varied considerably, there were three distinct categories of response among the students:

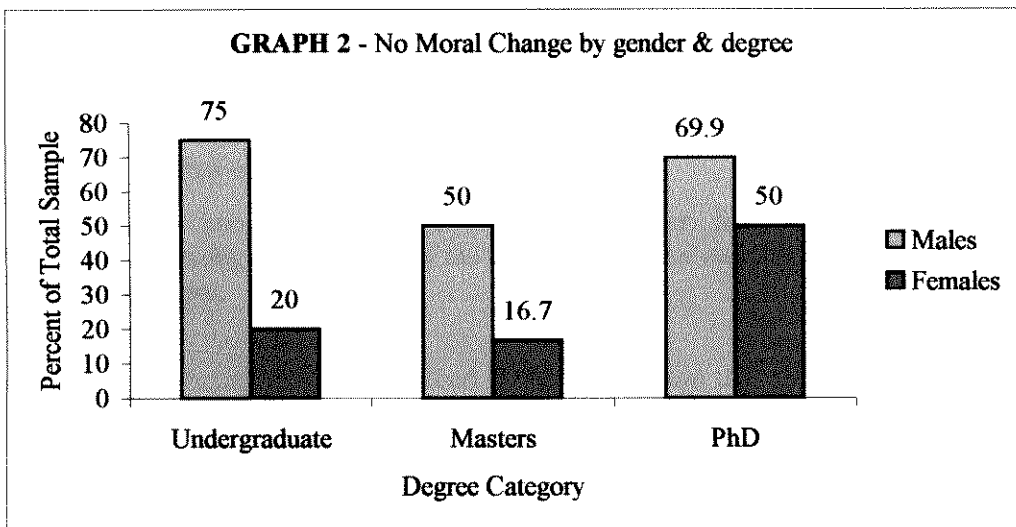
- 1) Students who experienced *NO MORAL CHANGE*.
- 2) Students who experienced *SOME MORAL CHANGE*.
- 3) Students who experienced *PROFOUND MORAL CHANGE*.

In order to present to the reader a more clear and detailed picture of the extent and nature of the moral challenges and changes that occurred, each of these categories will be examined separately, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data into the discussion. Excerpts from twenty-five accounts have been selected out of the forty students in Sample (A), the interview sample, in order to illustrate some of the most salient themes. Excerpts from the accounts of the remaining fifteen students in Sample (A) were not selected either a) because they illustrated themes already selected, or b) because during the interview, these students did not elaborate on the reasons for their experiences and/or perspectives. As explained in chapter two, qualitative data from Sample (B), the survey questionnaire, will be used as supplementary material to verify, modify or add to the findings from Sample (A). In order to avoid altering the meaning intended by the respondents, no corrections have been made to the grammar of the excerpts used in this study.

NO MORAL CHANGE

In Sample (A), twenty-one students (52.5%), and in Sample (B), a further twenty-four (60%), for a combined total of forty-five students (56.3%), indicated that they had experienced "no change" to their moral values and ideas as a result of their time at university in Australia. A greater proportion of males (64% of total males) than females (33% of total females) reported that they had experienced "no moral change".

Among the males, the Undergraduate degree category had the highest percentage of students who experienced no moral change (75% of all male Undergraduates), while among the females the PhD degree category had the highest percentage of students (50% of all female PhD's) who reported no moral change. The following graph illustrates the No Moral Change response according to gender and degree.



A "no change" response is an important one that requires examination, given that a decision by an individual **not** to change in certain situations can also reveal some important features of that individual's moral foundation and values. The following nine accounts from Sample (A) have been selected in order to illustrate some of the themes that emerged as students in this category recounted their experiences in the West, and some of the factors that appeared to contribute to those experiences.

1) **Apprehensive Attitude**

Some of the students who reported in the interview that they had "not changed" any of their moral values here had developed an apprehensive attitude towards life in the West either before, or just after their arrival in Australia. Those who were most apprehensive about their time here in the West were the married students who had brought their children with them. The most common theme expressed among these students was worry concerning the exposure of their children to what they saw as the morally negative side of Western culture. In addition, many parents, although viewing their time in the West as a positive learning experience, were fearful not only that their children would grow up abandoning their Islamic heritage if they stayed here for long, but also that would adopt the moral values of the West.¹⁶ As one student (1: Indonesian, male, 38, PhD, 4 years) remarked,

One thing that I can describe, that I encounter as difficulty as a Muslim...is just like a feeling of worry, you know. Worry, worry, anxiety you know. But not for me...it is for my children.

This student, like many, was concerned with the openness of sexual relationships here. For him, the lifestyle of the West, as evidenced by people kissing in public, was constantly on display, something that embarrassed him.

Like here, you know...like kissing. I very often encounter...like, the young girl and a young man kissing on the corner of the street. That is the way, the lifestyle of the West, you know.

This student's apprehension was reinforced by his perception that there was a clash between his Indonesian culture and the West's values. As he said, "I think maybe we can say that there is a conflict. That's not only not allowed by Islam, but that is not the culture of the Indonesian."

Interestingly, some of his apprehension appears to have resulted from images of the West portrayed in the media back home, and from Western movies that he had seen.

I read a lot of things...magazines, newspaper, or watching movie...especially movie. That gives an image of what the West is. The image of the West for...like the Indonesian, is like that. The West is similar to, like, free sex...or something.

This imagery, accepted as truth beforehand, was reinforced by the experiences of other Muslim students who communicated their own sense of moral apprehension. "I was told by a Malaysian that he didn't buy a TV because he is afraid that the TV show will affect his children's attitude."

Another student (21: India, male, 41, PhD, 2 years) who reported no moral change and who had a significant apprehension about his children being exposed to the moral values of the West disliked the "free mixing" and kissing between males and females in public, "like on the beach or some place like that." He explained,

Because when the children are young, and they are exposed to that, then there is no control on them and...it really needs some guidance, you know. Here, its very open, maybe more open than India.

He was also apprehensive because of the ever-present images of nakedness in local newsagents, and in the media in general. He added,

Also like the sex magazines and all the adult shops, movies. In India also, there are some places, but they are kind of, you know, kept away from the general environment, and public. But here, it's in newsagents, shops...everywhere exposed. You go to gas station, its right in front of the counter. So, when I went, you know, to newsagent to buy some books for my children...my children are so astonished to see all these nude pictures...like in the front...and they don't know what it is. And when I pulled them away, and told them to stay over there...then I see there's a big picture of...! This is kind of...somehow it should...if it is possible, you know, it should be removed. I think this is a problem for the Australian people also. Young kids, I mean, there is no need...When they grow old they will know. But why should they be exposed, you know, right from the beginning? This is what I don't understand.

Although he admitted this problem was not unique to the West, but was "a problem in India also", he took active measures to protect himself and his children from what he saw as Western moral decadence. While he appreciated the openness and freedom available to him in the West, he made sure he controlled the activities of his children so they would avoid overtly sexual images. As he explained,

I manage them. I keep them away. And we go to places, like we have parks and all that. In the daytime...like Auburn gardens is a very nice garden...so especially in gardens and public places, things are still clean. But if you enter some shops, there's some problems. We have identified some places where we can easily move, so it's still manageable.

Life in the West for this student, then, represented a challenge to maintain Islamic moral values and avoid what he perceived as the sexual openness prevalent in the Western lifestyle. His apprehensive attitude - born out of a desire to protect his children's' moral values - appears to have contributed to/and reinforced a determination not to change. Because of this disposition, he also sought to avoid social situations that would challenge his beliefs.

2) The Guarded disposition

Another factor that appeared to play an important part in contributing to the "no moral change" response was the development by a number of students of a "guarded" disposition towards life in the West. Consequently, they sought to actively **protect** themselves and their Islamic values. A common theme expressed by students in this grouping was the need to be wary of getting too involved with certain aspects of Western culture, or of becoming too complacent to the dangers of Western moral norms. As a result, they often restricted the scope of their social and cultural activities, and limited to other Muslims (in many cases) the relationships they formed here.

One of the most common perceptions among those who developed a guarded disposition towards life in the West was that the Western social environment was morally "undesirable", or even "dangerous." As one student (5: Malaysian, male, 23, Undergraduate, 2 years) put it, "I think the West is a values threat sometimes. Liberalism in the extreme...Too much emphasis on the individual. Our country emphasises the group...more family wise."

Another young Malaysian student (14: male, 21, Undergraduate, 6 years) who lived in an apartment complex owned and run by the Malaysian government specifically for Malaysian students, perceived the Western social environment as "too free", and therefore a potential danger to his beliefs. He explained,

Too many freedoms...because here we can do anything, right? So for example going to discos...being too socialised, and everything. I mean, everybody can do anything that he would like to here. And we are not subjected to any direct control from others, like my family at home in Malaysia, for example. So we are free to do anything. So we got to be careful, and we got to prevent ourselves...because I am a Muslim, right...so to socialise is sort of prohibited in our religion.

One of the freedoms which the Western university environment affords all students, whether Muslim or not, is the opportunity to mix with individuals from the opposite sex. This student also viewed "mixing" with members of the opposite sex as a potential danger. He explained,

Well, we come to the class and group discussions, and mix boys and girls, and just have a laugh and have discussions. Sometimes we go for some meal or other thing. Probably it is not that much to me or to my friends. Some other friends they go further...I mean, go to the movies together, and go to parties, disco together. And that is prohibited in our religion...it has not happened to me yet.

While this was a common response among many other students as well, it was most evident again among those from the more conservative Islamic societies where certain moral or religious ideas were reinforced through cultural, religious or political institutions.

For another student who maintained a guarded disposition (6: Kuwait, male, 30, Masters, 2 years) the West was a threat to his Islamic values and ideals because it was a place of many temptations.

There is a sort of problem here for a Muslim coming from conservative society... coming to an open country, where everything is free and open, like, sexuality. There is nobody of your family seeing you. You can do anything. Nobody can catch you doing the wrong thing, so you are free. You can do anything. So, for example, if you are a Muslim afraid from Allah, you don't do it. If you are caught doing wrong things, God is seeing you. So you behave very cautious about things. But if, for example, if a young man 18, 19, or 20 came here, and, like, he has a lot of money without any thinking, or wisdom...he can spend. A lot of friends who came to West, they turn almost Western...their clothing and their ideas. I mean, they are also impressed by West, and do a lot of bad things.

As in a previous case, many of this student's images of the West as a morally threatening culture came from images received through family and other returning students.

My brothers all studied in the United States. So I asked them before I came, "How is the life there?" They told me there were some difficulties if you went alone. If someone comes in a younger age, they could face a lot of problem.

Also, students will be telling me of these stories, what they did...I mean their experience. They go to casino or bars, or disco, or nightclub...Or, have a girlfriend. But a girlfriend in our country is a very strange thing. A friend like that you have got to...like hide, because shame...because the family of the girl will not allow you to go with a girl without marriage.

An important factor in this particular student's determination to avoid moral change was his conservative Islamic background. As he explained, "we don't have a lot of these things in Kuwait...for example we have conservative society." His devout religious disposition reinforced his determination to avoid the moral challenges of the West. He was the only student interviewed, for example, who flew back to his own country in order to perform the month long fast of Ramadan. He continued, "But, actually I don't fast here. For fasting Ramadan, I return to Kuwait. When it is summer holiday here...I return to Kuwait for a month and a half."

His conservative Islamic background was also a major factor contributing to his strict observance of Islamic religious duties here.

Yeah, I mean, there is not a lot of Halal food, so you have to be very cautious, to buy Halal food...maybe you eat...Oh yeah, once I ate pork without...I thought it was meat, or beef. Now I ask "Is it pork or ham?" So, I was very frustrated with that. You have to be cautious about eating. Or, for example, if you want to pray. Thanks God, we have a mosque here. But at other universities they don't have a place to pray, so it becomes very difficult.

His apprehensive attitude concerning the moral influence of life in the West was a major factor in his decision to seek out accommodation in a Muslim area of Sydney in order to be among Muslim - and more specifically Arabic - people.

I live in Lakembah, which is very...it's like almost dominated by Muslims...and Arabs. It makes less pressure for me. I don't know this country. I came alone, so I suppose it is better to stay near Arabs. If you want to seek help, they can help you. So that is first thing...second thing was because it's near the Mosque...so I can pray. This from the beginning was very important for me.

By living near Arabic Muslims, he could avoid the potential influence that the West's non-Islamic environment might have upon him. As he explained, he had "no religious problems, because I am living next to Mosque, and I am doing five prayers, as I am in Arabic, Islamic country."

For this student, then, being in the West served to confirm and strengthen not only his own religious commitment, but also his belief that Islam is also the answer for the West.

When someone is seeing the video, or the cinema, there are a lot of things which come from Western...he wants to see these thing. But when he came there, to West, and live for awhile there in Western country...he says "Okay, this is what? This is the club, this is the girl. Then what?" Actually he understands that the big values actually are in Islam, because Islam...I mean they are living like...I don't want you to feel offended...but they are living like...like animals. So actually Islam is the big value. So now he understands, I think."

3) The Insular Mentality

A third factor that played an important part in contributing to the "no moral change" response was a mindset that I have called the "insular" mentality. Briefly described, this pattern of thinking entailed a sense of moral detachment from life in the West, supported by a view that the West was a good place to obtain higher academic qualifications and technological skills, but not a society with good moral values. Students who exhibited this particular frame of mind appeared also to have come to the West with very specific material and scientific objectives, and often expressed the desire to return as soon as possible to their

homelands not only with their new qualifications, technology, and marketable skills, but also with their cultural and religious values intact.

As the following student shows (20: Iran, male, 29, PhD, 4 years), for those with an "insular" mentality, the main objective of studying in the West is simply to obtain scientific, and technological skills.

I think the most important reason the government sent us here was because of the facilities this country have, compared to our universities. Because of the economical condition in Iran the universities and the laboratories are not well equipped, so actually the facilities here are quite good, maybe the standards are higher. I believe that, because you've got very good lecturers, and they are updated with the new information. But we don't have the equipment, so we can't practically do anything. So that's the main reason that we are here. The most I like about it is actually in the science and technology they've got.

One characteristic of this student was that he avoided the moral challenges of life in the West by limiting his friendships. He had no Australian friends, "just those who I am meeting at school", and made little effort to develop friendships with Westerners. In effect he shielded himself from moral challenges by maintaining a strict interpretation of Islamic law. As he explained, he did not go out with Australians, or have them over to his place for a visit,

because we have some religious – what do you call them - taboos or restrictions. For example, when you go with someone where you drink, it can be insulting. We can't because it can't be Halal. Do you know what I mean by Halal? The meat should be Halal. Or, it shouldn't actually have any part of pork, or whatever. It's difficult to communicate. When you go with your friend, he expects you to have food with him, or he expects you to drink. So it makes some obstacles in making friends, or have a relationship going...especially to each other's place or something.

As a consequence of his insular mentality, this student was not even open to the possibility of change. Just being in the West was a "disadvantage", because he was exposed, he said, to a "different culture, which has different values. There's more freedom here." This became a disadvantage because it challenged his moral reference points, his family and culture.

In my country - because of the religious situation...and because of the very strong bond between the family and persons - you can't do everything you want...because, you know, you see people watching you. But here, you don't have that, you can do whatever you want. But in Iran, no...because of cultural considerations.

Coming to the West with an insular mentality thus provided this student with a strong motive to retain his moral reference points - in his case, family and culture. As this student's primary objective was to obtain higher qualifications and return home to serve his nation, it

was unnecessary to examine his moral foundation. Being able to identify himself as culturally Muslim, he could maintain a second fixed moral reference point, and draw strength to resist the moral challenges of life in the West.

I would not live permanently in the West, no...because of the moral thing, because of the – especially you know, we are a family, we have a family. They are very dependent...my mother, father. They all are over there, so it's very difficult to be far from them. I've been raised in a country that economically and politically has had many problems, so I think I am in debt to this country. I have to serve the country now that they've provided me the scholarship to come here and study. So I have to go and serve them back.

For this student, then, having an insular mentality allowed him to remain distant emotionally and intellectually from life in the West and from the possibility of moral change. His work obligations back home restricted his options here in the West, causing him to focus on obtaining specific technological skills with which he could help his people and government. His final comment clearly illustrates the narrow range of options he had open to him. When asked where he thinks he will work when he goes home he replied, "I don't know for sure, the place where the government wills, I should work there." This student, then, was never even open to change his moral values because his single objective in coming - to obey the government that had paid his way, and to obtain the skills he was sent to get - had the effect of restricting the range of choices available to him.

4) Rejection of the values of the West as inferior

Another factor that appeared to contribute to the response by many students that they had not changed any of their moral values was their perception that the West was a morally inferior culture to that of the Islamic world.

One student (9: Pakistan, male, 27, PhD, 3 years) was shocked by what he viewed as the abuse of parents in the West, and scathing in his condemnation of the value system that would allow such a thing. He said,

Here, for example, parents and their children...I feel it makes me a bit uncomfortable. I think I am living with strange people. What kind of reality? What kind of values when the parents talk about the children, or the children talk about their parents? They talk as though the worst person on earth is my father, the worst person on the earth is my son. Why do they look at their mother like this? Who cared for them for so long? Who carried them for nine months? Who fed them for two years, at least? And who took care of them when they couldn't move even? And when they are grown up, they are talking about the same person differently.

The West treats its older people badly. All of these old people homes. I have never been to them, but I saw them on movies. Miserable place on earth these old peoples homes. I mean, they need you. When you need them, they were there. They looked after you, until you became independent. And now they are dependent, and you are leaving them on the mercy of other people. You are leaving them on the mercy of the people who are working for a salary. Their interest in the old peoples home is because they are getting a job and money. So you are actually selling your parents to them. It is funny that their priority list, the first most important person, is not there.

I feel uncomfortable, because they are not thankful to those two people who worked for them, and did more for them than anybody else on this earth can do for them. If they are not thankful to the two of them, and their relations are like this, then what would you expect of those people? What values would they have around you? What kind of value would they give you, whoever you are, whatever you do for them? So, whenever I see my friends here, I just complain about this thing...that if you can do this sometime, give some consideration to your parents in your life.

His attitude of moral superiority became clearly evident when he described the way he travelled home, at great expense, to take care of his father when he became sick. He said,

For example, for me, my mother and father are the two most important people on this earth. I left my study here when my dad was sick. And we spent a lot to go back and see them. But I see life like that. I am here because of my parents. So, if I don't care for them, I am actually negating my existence. If they are valueless, then I am valueless.

This student's response, then - that he had not changed any of his moral values - seemed to be partly attributable to his attitude of superiority towards the moral values of the West. Adopting any of the values of the West, for this student, might amount to moral digression. His attitude of moral superiority thus had the effect of making him less open to new ideas, and less willing to examine his own moral values.

It also had the effect of giving him a reason for reaffirming his own Islamic moral values. The increase in this student's religiosity since coming here appeared to be related to his increasing uncomfortableness with some of the values of the West. He explained,

Religious wise, the main problem is I face fasting Ramadan. We are not suppose to...I mean fasting is for each part of your body. You can't see evil, you can't discuss evil, you can't talk evil...anything. In Australia I found it very difficult, fasting in this society. People are naked almost. I have spent only one Ramadan here, and that was in summer. I felt very uncomfortable, because it is a spiritual thing...and when you feel that you are not performing this duty according to its spirit, or according to the soul, you feel uncomfortable. That is where the openness of the society effects you.

Other students, too, were concerned about the moral values in the West in regard to the treatment of families. Like the previous student, this student (25: Pakistan, female, 35, Masters, 2 years) viewed family life in the West as inferior when she said, "The West has a problem with morality. I mean like the concept of family. The way we have family is very tied together. Here I don't see that." For this student, the moral "weakness" of the West stemmed from the West's emphasis on the individual rather than on the well being of family and society. She said,

I mean, once a child gets to be thirteen or fourteen he or she, you know, asks to earn their own income and then tries to make up their own personal experiences...whereas back home, we have...like a protection for the families. Especially the kids. They are more protected, and...I like the family ties that we have. They're stronger.

A third student who perceived the West as morally inferior, and who also reported no moral change, was from Ghana (7: Ghana, male, 30, Masters, 2 years). This student was shocked by what he saw in the West, because he had previously considered Westerners morally superior. As a result of his experiences here, however, he now viewed white Westerners (in particular) as morally inferior. He said,

I thought, you know, the white man were too superior, that is what I thought. I thought they were very honest, they don't cheat. But I am very shocked here. They lie, they steal. I thought the white man were very perfect. Because in my country we have, actually in my town, we have a very mighty hospital, built by the Baptists. So the way they behave there, I thought the white man is very perfect, they don't cheat, they don't steal, everything is just straightforward. But I was shocked when I came here, and I just seen the life of the drunkard. I never thought of these things. It is just the opposite the way I thought about it.

As a result of this perception, this student seemed to avoid the moral challenges of life in the West by labelling particular values as Western (and therefore inferior), and then rejecting them. He viewed drug taking, for example, as "a very Western way of living, because the drugs are not good for you," and then rejected that kind of lifestyle when he said, "Why should you take it...something that is not good for you? I think any reasonable human being shouldn't go for it. Because, you know, it is going to harm you. Why should you do it? You see fire, and you go into fire. Why should you do that? Any reasonable human being would not do that."

Another Western value he observed here - and rejected - was the excessive freedom available to the youth. As he described it,

The way people are brought up here... you know, sixteen...you can live alone. I think the main problem is the way the government give the money. If you are...how many years is it?...and you can live by your own government gifts, youth support, or other things. In my country, the money is not even there for the government to give you. And that is the reason why people get spoiled here, because they are sure they get the money from the Government, and they can use the money to do anything. They live reckless lives. They don't care, because they always get the money free from the government. In my country you have to sweat before you get it. So if you get it, you know what to use it for. If you don't sweat for it - this is what I always have in mind - if you don't sweat for something, you don't know how to use it. You just use it anyhow, because you haven't sweated for it. But if you sweat for it, you know where to put it.

As a result of identifying what he called the "traps" (his wording) of the West (that is, alcohol, drugs, girls, and movies), he sought to avoid situations which might compromise his values, even avoiding having Western friends. As he explained, "No, I don't have many Western friends. I don't like having friends who are drunkards, or who drink especially. I don't want to mix with them. If I am there with them, I am able to talk about my religion. That is all."

In addition to his perception that the West was morally inferior, another factor that contributed to this student's determination not to change was his deep commitment to Islam. Before coming to Australia, he had already faced - and conquered - many moral challenges. As he stated, "I am just the same. There is not much difference. Back home we have discos and other things and I never go, here I see them and never go. Movies here I never go...back home I never go." Some of those challenges, rather, came from within his family. As he recalled,

In my family there are drunkards. I got converted, and my way of life was different from my other brothers. My way of life was better than their way of life. And through that some of them became converts...they also converted to Islam. Because I was clean, do everything...In a way they saw that my life was very different from theirs. It was better than theirs, and because of this, some of them became converts. I have drunkards in my family. I talk to them, but they never listen. But what can you do? Some people's minds say that you can't convince me. Just like my mind is, nobody can convince me to do anything that is bad. So peoples minds...you can't convince them to do what is good. What they are doing, they think is good for them. So they continue to do it.

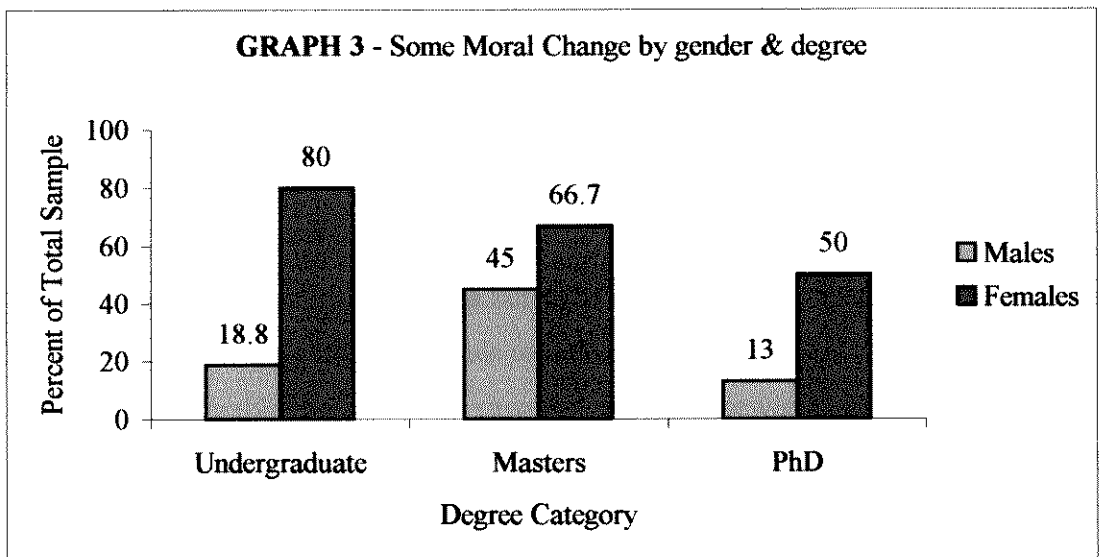
Because of his perceptions of the West as a morally inferior culture, this student viewed moral change as highly undesirable, and subsequently determined that he would not change. Some of that determination to remain true to his Islamic values was the result of challenges to his beliefs previously, through family and society back home. Nonetheless, as he

explained, as a result of his experiences in the West, he became even more convinced of the truth of his Islamic religion, and subsequently renewed his commitment to Islamic values. He stated quite confidently, "To me, there is no amount of word that can convince me to change my way of life here. The way I am, that is the way I will be until I die."

SOME MORAL CHANGE

A second category of response consists of those students who experienced "some moral change" since being in the West. In Sample (A), sixteen students (40%), and in Sample (B), twelve students (30%), for a combined total of twenty-eight students (35%) indicated they had experienced some moral change. A greater proportion of females (61.9% of total females) than males (25% of total males) experienced some moral change.

Among the males, the Masters degree level had the highest percentage of students that experienced some moral change (45% of male Masters students), while among the females, the Undergraduate level had the highest percentage of students (80% of female Undergraduates) that reported some moral change. The following graph illustrates the Some Moral Change response according to gender and degree.



For students who experienced some moral change, living in the West presented opportunities to re-evaluate some of the values they held to be Islamic, and to readjust, in different ways, their own moral perspectives. This adjustment, as the following accounts show, indicated that these students had indeed become more Western in their moral

foundation, values, or ideas. The following thirteen accounts from Sample (A) have been selected in order to illustrate some of the ways the moral values of students in this category were changed, and some of the themes that emerged as they recounted their experiences in the West.

There were three main factors that appeared to play a role in the moral change experienced by students in this group:

- 1) An open mind, and a "learner" attitude.
- 2) An appreciation for the values of the West.
- 3) The absence, in the West, of familiar Islamic cultural and religious constraints.

1) The open mind and learner attitude

For one student (8: Libya, male, PhD, 3 years), living in the West presented an opportunity to reconsider not only his moral values, but also the foundation upon which those values were based. This student experienced change in four significant ways.

First, there was a gradual shift from a theistic ("sacred") to a humanistic ("profane")¹⁷ foundation for social and moral values.¹⁸ Adopting a Western perspective - albeit unintentionally - he had increasingly moved away from a strictly religious (Islamic) moral reference point, where the morality of an action or idea is determined solely by reference to the Qur'an, to a reference point where morality is based on reason, individual preferences or utility.

As the following comment illustrates, he began to view the moral rightness of an action no longer in terms of the absolutes of Islamic moral law, but in terms of what would be acceptable, or preferable in a particular situation. He now viewed nudity in public, for example, as not always wrong, but permissible, so long the government set aside a specific place for that activity. As he explained,

If it is on the beach, and it is a place where people are coming to be in their costume, I am not against that. I am saying that if I go there, then it is me who has gone there. You know what I am saying? But casually, you see people... Yes, if the government said you can be naked only in certain places, I think people would appreciate that.

Second, there was an increasing shift to reason, and human happiness - rather than the Qur'an - as the basis for evaluating the morality of actions. Again, this indicated a move towards a Western, humanistic perspective on moral ideas. When he stated that nudity should be allowed - albeit in restricted locations - he seemed to justify his argument on the basis that this was the most reasonable thing to do, and that it would make many others happy as well. He said, "Not only Muslims, but any person...Catholic or whatever...would appreciate that very much." As a result of this shift towards reason, he changed in attitude as well, developing a greater degree of tolerance towards the views of others.

Third, as the basis of his moral values shifted away from the absolutes of the Qur'an to relative values - those endorsed by reason - his thinking became increasingly instrumental and utilitarian; an action was morally right if it served some useful purpose. As this student argues, for example, nudity should be restricted in public not because the Qur'an says so, but because, "I think that would add a positive point to Australia."

Fourth, as he continued to adopt a Western liberal perspective, his values became individualistic, and democratic. He espoused the view that moral values were autonomous, that is, independent of traditional religious belief. As a result, he supported the view that an individual had a right to choose his own moral perspective. Actions now became morally right so long as they didn't hurt others. Other than that, "You are free to do what you want."

There were several factors that appeared to contribute to the change experienced by this student. First, he had a questioning mind, one of his most salient characteristics. As he stated,

I question from the time I was in high school actually. And I don't just accept things as they are. I try to be myself. Even my parents sometimes find it very hard, because I don't want to be a copy of anyone...even my father or mother. I want to be myself.

As a result of having a questioning attitude, living in the West was not viewed as a threatening experience, but rather as an opportunity to enjoy a freedom that was not available in his own society. One thing he really appreciated here, which was "limited" in his country, he said, was the freedom of expression. He commented,

I like very much the freedom of expression. Because I don't see any limit there. I mean, clothing and some other behaviours...I think you could set some limits. But expression hasn't got any limit, in my opinion. And this thing I appreciate.

Back home he had become "a bit in rebellion" towards Islamic religious authorities, which he viewed as too restrictive. They resented questions, he explained,

You know, if you ask too much, or you question why, they hate it. They think it is disrespectful to say "Why?", or not to do something. So in my culture I think it lacks freedom very much. But here, there is nothing such as this. I like it myself, very much. I would say I would stick to this. I like freedom of expression.

Despite the fact that he too was concerned about what he saw as "too much freedom" here for individuals, especially in regards to nakedness in public, which he views as "degrading", because, "you could see a young girl, a lady, almost naked...and she thinks she is free to show off whatever she wants, especially in the summer", he seemed to be able to look beyond the excesses to which too much individual freedom could be taken out of an appreciation of the freedom he found here to search for knowledge without interference from those back home who viewed questioning as wrong.

Another factor that appeared to contribute to the change experienced by this student was that he had a desire to learn and adopt as much as he could from the West - not only in terms of technology, and science - but also in terms of those moral virtues or attitudes that appeared to him to be central to the development of the modern West. As a result, he was far less apprehensive about establishing friendships with non-Muslims, for example, and was excited about the opportunity to mix socially with people from other cultures.

I have many non-Muslim friends...people from different religions. Also we have very good neighbours. They are good friends. We exchange gifts. They bring us gifts at Christmas, and we take to them food, sweets that we make. I think we are getting on very well.

In addition, unlike the married students with children in the "no change" category who reported that they were apprehensive about the moral influence of the West upon their children, this student appeared relatively unconcerned about the West's potential negative influence on his children's moral and cultural values. As he explained, despite the moral challenges his children faced because of the sex education classes, he was happy because of the learning experiences they were having.

Sometimes, to be honest...sometimes my boys especially get a bit sensitive when it comes to...they have this personal development course where there is too much

about sex...talking about this. But not really a big problem, because they should learn. I tell them learning about sex is not a bad thing. It is good to learn. But of course, to act accordingly, that is what is important.

While he was aware of the potential negative moral influence of the West, he valued the opportunity his children had to learn about other cultures. Because of the high value he now placed on knowledge, he viewed going to a public school as a positive learning experience for them. He explained,

To me, there is one thing that I always stress. They hear something, they have to think...even for my sons. They have to question themselves, before they accept or reject. You can talk about anything. I don't see any limit.

In fact, he took great pride in their academic achievement. As he explained, "the most enjoyable thing" being here in the West was,

My kids becoming part of the "A+" students. I like that very much. Again my daughter won this competition. It was multicultural week. They had a competition, and she won. Generally, I would say the best thing is the progress of my kids in their education.

When asked whether they were getting a better education here than in Libya he replied,

Yes, that is true. I mean, as an approach and the methodology here, it is much better. Here they try to make you learn...to teach yourself, lets say. Also to know what is surrounding you. Openness is there. And to teach about the environment, even for little kids in year three...that is very, very positive.

For this student, then, being in the West - and facing difficult questions - was a way for him to mature. And if he could live long term in the West, would he see that as a problem for his children? "No. As a Muslim, I don't think there would be any problem. That is not any big challenge."

There were other students, too, who indicated they were "open minded" here, and who appeared to shift towards a Western, humanistic perspective in regards to some moral values. When asked how she would feel if the United Nations proposed to make abortion a universal human right, for example, one student (3: Indonesia, female, 34, PhD, 4 years) replied, "No, I don't agree." Her response was interesting, however, not because she viewed abortion as wrong - a position that many Muslims would hold - but because she was concerned that any particular moral value might be viewed as universal, and thus "imposed" on the whole world. She would allow for a diversity of moral perspectives, indicating a shift away from an Islamic moral foundation (where certain values are fixed and universal), to a

relativistic foundation (where values are autonomous and individualistic). She said, "For me, I think this is very ridiculous, if the UN tried to impose one value for very diverse beliefs in the world. There are some things that you can't propose as universal."

She also increasingly adopted a moral reference point that was based in reason, not in the revelation of the Qur'an. In her view, reason and dialogue were important and must be given a role in deciding moral values. She added, "But maybe there is a condition...which part? We should talk and sit down." In fact, she seldom referred to the Qur'an and the laws of Islam during the interview, but placed a high value on understanding the context within which moral decisions were made, and spoke often of the importance of considering individual choices and preferences.

This student exhibited several characteristics that appeared to contribute to the shift in her moral perspective. First - like the previous student - she had come with an open mind, and, as a result, viewed her time here as an opportunity to gain insight into the way that other people think. As she explained, most of her friends here were "non-Muslims", a situation she would be unable to experience in Indonesia, and something she really valued.

I have some Muslim friends and some non-Muslim friends. I'm quite multi-national, I have Indian friends, Chinese, Middle East, Greek, Palestinian, Australian, Japanese, Malaysian, Singaporean...and some Indonesians. Even my Muslim friends, most of them are not Indonesian...some Iranian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Palestinian. I learn not only as a Muslim, but also their culture. That's the interesting one. Here you meet so many cultures.

And second, she had developed a willingness to listen to other, non-Islamic moral perspectives, believing she could learn something from them. As she said, "I don't really have problem relating to both, because I really enjoy learning from other cultures."

A third student who experienced a shift away from a theistic foundation for some of her moral values, and who was "open minded" here was from Pakistan (16: Pakistan, female, 27, PhD, 2 years). While she certainly spoke of the importance of Islam in her life, she too had become open here to non-Islamic perspectives, even to the point of accepting other religions and their views on life itself. As this statement illustrates, acceptance and tolerance had become the highest values, indicating a shift to a Western humanist moral perspective.

I am open to many things in life in the sense that I don't...I never reject people on the basis of religion, caste, or culture. I don't group people into those categories, and I

don't reject them on that basis...because I know that we are all seeking the same truth of this universe. And whoever the God is, I think He wants that too, because in every book everywhere He says so. It is just different means, and different ways of trying. So to me, the most important thing is a human being.

As a result of the high value she now placed on tolerance and acceptance, she appeared less willing to speak of morality in terms of Islamic absolutes. "Even if a woman has an abortion, I won't reject that woman as a bad woman. I am not the sort of person who will say that this person is wrong because she did that." Her values also became utilitarian. When she explained that some things were wrong, like "switching from one partner to another", her reasoning was not based on Islamic moral absolutes, but rather on what was best for an individual. People should obey moral laws, because "It would make them a good human being."

Perhaps as a result of valuing tolerance towards other perspectives so highly, she now even showed a willingness to marry a non-Muslim. "If I met somebody who was a Christian, or a Hindu, and I found him to be a real good person, a very compatible person, then probably I won't reject him on the basis of religion."

There were several factors that may have contributed to her tolerance of other perspectives and her willingness to marry a non-Muslim. First, she came from family who were "open minded," she said. As she explained,

There would be a certain sort of thing, like "Why are you doing this?" Probably my parents and my sister and brother would ask me why not a Muslim man. But I know that they are very broad minded, open minded sort of people. They would accept it on the basis of that person is important to me, and I am the one who is going to spend my life with him. So I think they will accept it, but there will be a question, "Why not a Muslim?"

Second, she developed an open attitude towards other viewpoints because of the multi-cultural environment of the university. She explained, "In Pakistan, 98% of people are Muslims, so I didn't have much chance to mix with non Muslims there." Here, however, she could mix socially with non-Muslims, and form friendships with students from other ethnic backgrounds. "But here, I mix well with Christians and Hindus, and I don't find it difficult. I respect them, and they respect me. If I don't take pork, they respect me. I mean, I respect their beliefs and their things."

2) Growing appreciation for the values of the West

Another factor that appeared to play a role in the change experienced by some students was the development of an increasing admiration for - and in many cases acceptance of - some of the moral values they observed in the West. There were a number of values encountered here that contributed to a shift towards a Western moral perspective for these students.

2.1 Personal freedom

One of the values that made a significant impact upon the lives of many students was the personal freedom they experienced in the West. Of particular interest was the fact that seven (50%) of the females interviewed (Sample (A)) indicated they were very impressed with the freedom women had here, compared to their own societies. One student, for example (19: Indonesia, female, 21, Undergraduate, 2 years) was impressed the freedom she found here for individuals to say what they feel and think. "Maybe the thing that has made an impact on me is people speak...not freely, but whenever there is something wrong, you can actually speak...you can say what you think...openness, yeah."

This appreciation was accompanied by a corresponding attitude of criticism and rejection of some of her own cultural values, indicating a further shift towards some of the values of the West.

People are open here, but sometimes in Indonesia they hide something... especially if it is something bad, and wrong. But here, we can be open to talk about it. That is something that is very good. I am impressed with that.

While she remained committed to Islamic values in general, however, she also appeared to develop a somewhat critical attitude towards moral weaknesses that she now identified in the Islamic world, remarking, "Actually, Western people apply the laws. I think Muslims should apply them more."

Another student (25: Pakistan, female, 35, Masters, 2 years) said that for her, the most enjoyable thing about being in the West was being free to be herself. She said, "I am able to be who I am. I'm able to have more freedom." She explained,

It means that if I want to practise my religion I can do that. If I want to dress up the way I want, I'm able to do that. I mean there's - I mean here I've not felt that - that I'm being pinpointed...that "she's from Pakistan" or "she's different." I'm able to go out unsupervised...and I'm able to go wherever I like without being, you know, focused on.

A third student (30: Bangladesh, female, 36, PhD, 2 years) said that she too appreciated being able to go out anywhere. "In our country we cannot go out much. I'm restricted. But here I can go to any place. There's a lot of freedom for a woman in this country."

Appreciation for this freedom, however would lead to difficulties back in her own culture when she went home. She explained,

After the Masters degree, I realised I could have so much freedom, and that makes adjustment very difficult...Very difficult. Because suddenly...nobody back home seems to understand that I've seen this, enjoyed this freedom, and its difficult to go back...but you have to. And I think that's the biggest drawback of studying in a Western country. I told the Australian High Commissioner when all students were invited over, and I said, 'You changed me, but you didn't change anything around me'. So when I go back home I find it so difficult. I cannot go out, I have to ask permission. But you live here two or three years and you just get used to that freedom, and its very important for a woman. For men it doesn't matter so much.

A fourth student (40: Indonesia, female, 35, Masters, 2 years) said that she really appreciated the intellectual freedom she had here. She was becoming "Western" she said, in her "way of thinking" because "Now nobody can control me, I can control my thinking myself. Here there is more intellectual freedom. In Indonesia, I have to...like someone controlled my way of thinking." She was impressed here because the West taught her to develop "critical thinking", a positive value, from her perspective. Going back to Indonesia would be difficult, she felt, because, "If I go back to Indonesia and my surroundings, I have to be careful because in Indonesia we have a different system, and we don't have that kind of freedom to criticise something."

A fifth student (32: Bangladesh, female, 32, Masters, 2 years) said that she appreciated the freedom women had in the West to "do whatever they like", because she could not even go out back in her country unescorted, and when she did go out, she had to be totally covered up. As she explained, "In Islam we have a Purdah system...I mean you have to cover our body properly. We have to have no physical contact with men." Here, however, she was free to go out at anytime, as she explained, "Here I don't think that it's in anybody's mind if I walk, or what I am doing." Like several others, her appreciation for the freedom she had here in the West, however, was accompanied by an increasing criticism of her own culture, indicating a shift towards the West and some of its values. She explained "women have more freedom here than in our country...I think we should have more than what we have now in our culture."

And a sixth student (31: Bangladesh, female, 37, Masters, 3 years) appreciated the freedom women had here to develop their potential and stand on an equal footing with men in employment. She explained, "Male development and female development is here, so everywhere women are working...that is important to me. In my country they don't have any autonomy...they make women stay at home." She also appreciated the fact that in the West, "Women can control their reproductive life." Her experiences in the West were an important catalyst for a significant shift towards the Western value of equality for women.

As she explained,

Because I have been in this society, I think more here than I thought before...Women should be more free...not just to go out to work, but everything. They should be given the same opportunity as the men.

2.2 Concern for the individual

Another value encountered in the West that appeared to contribute to a shift towards a Western moral perspective for one student (13: Maldives, male, 20, Masters, 2 years), was the concern he found in the West for each individual. Individuals here were accepted and affirmed, regardless of their religious differences. This student was particularly impressed by the openness he had to share his personal feelings and ideas. In fact, his most enjoyable experience, as he tells it, was at the end-of-year picnic he had with some of his fellow students where he could talk about his feelings, and receive personal affirmation and support.

All the medical students...we went down to Coogee Beach and had a picnic, and I had a lot of fun. That was in one of our tutorials, actually. And we were saying how we felt about each other, and getting feed back on how you could improve yourself, and about each other's personality. I enjoyed that. I love talking to people about intimate things. It is sort of like a basic need, or something like that.

As a result of the many opportunities he had here to discuss ideas and feelings openly, he became self confident, and more tolerant and accepting of the perspectives of others. He explained,

Back home you have all the same race and religion. You don't have to think differently about others...it is all the same. You can expect that what you think, they will think similar...like morals, and all of that. But it is so different, so multicultural here. You have to think a lot about others, and that they might think differently from you. I think it is a good thing...that you have to think about others. I think I enjoy doing it. Initially it was a shock, it was a big step. I had problems before, but I am doing fine now.

The multicultural environment of the university also contributed to his tolerance of other religious viewpoints. He explained,

Last year I lived with people from other countries. We had one Hindu, and one Buddhist, and two Muslims...so it was all right. She prayed, and we prayed, and they didn't seem to mind to much. She couldn't eat beef, and we couldn't eat ham, so we could only eat chicken and lamb. We were all very tolerant. It is interesting trying to find out what their principles are. I used to ask about Hinduism and Buddhism.

There were several significant changes that occurred in his attitude and lifestyle as a result of the acceptance and freedom this student experienced in the West. First, he chose to have far less contact with Muslim students than with non-Muslims. As he stated, "Well, there aren't a lot of Muslims...probably one or two. But I don't usually hang around with them."

And second, although he knew where to "draw the line" in order to protect and maintain his Islamic culture and beliefs, as evidenced by the statement, "My Aussie friends will usually go to the pub, but that is where I can't go", he no longer viewed religious differences as a problem, but now placed a higher value on tolerance and acceptance than on rigid adherence to certain religious ideals. As he explained,

Religion hasn't been much of a problem. I find that people here don't talk much about religion as well. Nobody really asked me if I was Muslim. They accepted me for what I am. Some people ask me about religion, just a few. I tell them what I feel. If you want to, you can still go to the Mosque, and things like that.

2.3 Honesty and integrity

And a third value encountered in the West that appeared to contribute to a shift in moral perspective for some was that of honesty. For one student (12: Pakistan, male, 25, Masters, 1 year), the West upheld values he felt were lacking in his own culture. As a result, there were several changes that occurred in this student's perspective. First, there was a shift to the West, and away from the Islamic world, as moral role model. He wanted to be like Westerners, he said, who valued honesty and integrity.

I think that we should be like Westerners in their nature. Like, they are not telling lies. They are good persons, and obeying the rules. Be honest...they say what they are going to do. Most people in Pakistan are saying something and doing something else.

Second, he was now motivated to implement moral change, to become a "good" person. "I think I will become a good person. I will tell the truth, but if I am forced to do these things - like I have to give bribe - I don't think I will do it."

Third, he developed a new sense of moral responsibility, desiring to improve the quality of life of his own people by taking some of the values of the West back to his own nation.

I want to teach them these things. I want my people to be like that. They know that we are wrong, but our politicians, our culture, and our strong people force them to do it. I want to do good things, but I have no choice. I have to do the wrong thing.

There were several factors that appeared to contribute to these changes. For one thing, he had experienced a high degree of personal freedom here. The thing he loved most, he said, was that "Nobody is interfering with what you are doing. The Australians are not watching you. They are living their own lives."

He had also seen the equality of all professions here. As he stated, "If you are barber over here, you are equally treated like an engineer. In our country, engineers are better than the barber. If you are a chef over here, you are equal to a minister. But in our country, they think that he is less."

This equality extended to work opportunities as well. Job advancement here, he noticed, was based on skills, not on social position, or power. "And about the merit...if you have ability, you can get a job. In our country, if you have something, you should also have political connections...or your father should be a rich man."

And finally, as a result of observing humility in the attitude of an Australian official in a high position of authority, he had also come to admire the Western view that an individual's value and social status should not be determined by wealth or position.

Another thing that is very good over here, is that if you are rich, you are living the simple life. But in our country, if you are rich, or in a big post, you think that you are different from ordinary people. Here, I see that if you are a minister, or rich, they are not thinking that they are better. They are living like ordinary men. In Pakistan, there was a man in the Australian Cultural Society...there was a minister over there who made a speech...and he is coming just like an ordinary man, and he mixed with the people. But in our country, if I am with a minister, he is like some god... he has like a covering around him.

3) Desire to experience some of the lifestyle of the West

A third factor that played a role in the moral change experienced by some students was a strong desire to experience some of the lifestyle of the West. Two students seemed to want to "experiment", for example, with various aspects of a Western lifestyle, participating in

activities or social events (like going to clubs, discos, and drinking alcohol) that would be considered "forbidden" back in their own societies.¹⁹ There were two reasons these students appeared to have this desire.

3.1 Absence of familiar Islamic cultural and religious constraints in the West.

One reason one of the students seemed to want to experiment with the lifestyle of the West was that the familiar religious and cultural "control" mechanisms of his home culture were now absent. Although this student (24: Bangladesh, male, 40, PhD, 3 years) said he participated in some of the lifestyle of the West because he wanted "to see and learn about Australian culture", it appeared that one of the principle reasons he spent a lot of time in clubs and discos was that there were no social or religious mechanisms in place here to prevent him. He was fascinated by the discos, and dancing, and even became a member of an Australian social club, the RSL (*Retired Servicemen's League*). As he explained, "I go to movies, discos. I have several times. When I came here, in Sydney, I went to so many nightclubs, and I took a membership at the RSL club. I was a member of the Marrickville branch of the RSL club."

Although he was quick to explain that the reason he went to clubs was, "Not to learn all these things, what they are doing. My purpose was to see and to understand Australian culture...what they do in clubs, and what is the purpose behind it", it appeared that he certainly enjoyed the activities there, an indicator of more than just a detached academic interest. As he stated...with a degree of excitement, There are so many nightclubs in Sydney, see. There are different clubs, and I went with my friends. Yeah, they're good...I love to know what other people are doing, so I went to so many clubs, and I had fun. I couldn't join in, because if you asked me to dance, my stepping is so poor. I can't because my socialisation is different. I tried, but it was painful.

While he felt going to clubs and discos did not compromise his commitment to Islam, he seemed to feel a little guilty, however, saying, "I didn't follow what they are doing, because what they do...I don't do that late in the night. But whenever I saw it, I liked to know what other people are doing...what they do, and why they do it."

Another statement he made that seemed to confirm my suspicion that he enjoyed being free from the watchful eyes of his religion and culture was, that he had also experimented with

alcoholic drinks during his previous stay at a university in Canada. "I tried it once when I was in Canada. The beer *Molson's Canadian* is the most popular one, and it...the taste was not very good to me." While he maintained that he was now opposed (on religious grounds) to drinking alcohol, saying, "I don't drink alcohol...because I am...from the point of a religious view...I'm not permitted to do that", I was not sure that he was being honest with me in his appeal to Islamic law to justify his current abstinence. Rather, it appeared to me that his abstinence might not be due to a respect for Islamic law, but because of the bad taste. As he stated, "So if you ask me to drink, I can drink it, but I will feel bad taste."

Another indicator that he was experimenting with the lifestyle of the West in areas he knew to be off limits, was that he felt guilt about what he was doing, and, as a result seemed to want to assure me that he was still following Islamic principles. He stated,

I want to keep my beliefs...because while I am here, I should consider it. I am here not to become an Australian. I have some purpose, and the purpose is to learn something, to have my degree...because I've got a job there in Bangladesh, who allowed me to escape here. And they also have a purpose, and the purpose is "You go, have your degree, learn something, have some knowledge, come here, and again, enjoy your job, and distribute this to your students." I am a teacher, so that's why I am here. I am here not to become a Western people, or to become Asian people. What I am...what I was...I will be like that.

3.2 Temporary Suspension of Religious Commitment

Another reason one of the students (11: Pakistan, male, 22, Undergraduate, 2 years) seemed to have a strong desire to experiment with activities here that would be frowned upon back in his own culture was that since arriving, he had chosen to suspend (albeit temporarily) his commitment to Islamic ideals and moral values.

Unlike the previous student, who said he was motivated by a desire to "learn about the culture of Australia", and who still remained firm in his commitment to Islam, this student viewed being in the West as not simply an opportunity to participate in a few activities like dancing and discos, but rather an opportunity to completely avoid the moral responsibilities of his Islamic heritage. Life in the West for this student, represented a welcome break from the "reality" of life back home. He stated, "It is fun. It is away from reality, probably. But you can always face reality once you go out into the real world, after uni."

One of the activities he participated in was going to wild parties, and, as he put it, "getting totally drunk." He said,

Yeah, we would go out for a good night on the town. We would go out to a night club, probably start drinking before we hit the town, have straight spirits just to get totally sloshed before we hit the town, dance all night, come back, collapse...Going out is usually at the weekends. Sometimes on a college big night. Like this week we had an end of year party...got totally drunk. Didn't plan to get drunk, but suddenly it was this good occasion, everyone was in the mood, and I joined in. Ended up totally hammered, dancing with this girl I had never danced with before. Ended up almost in bed together, but I controlled myself, walked away.

And yet, as evidenced in the following statement, the temporary suspension of commitment to his Islamic values in order to indulge in parties and dormitory social life produced a significant amount of guilt in his life.

At times you think the things you are doing...are they right or not? Like sometimes, when you get totally drunk. I guess everyone who gets totally drunk tries to think about whether it was the right decision to get totally hammered, or not. Things like that. Nothing major.

As he tried to ease the guilt, however, he justified his actions on the basis of the freedom to choose, indicating a significant shift from the moral absolutes of Islam to the Western notion that morality is a matter of individual choice. "At times I don't regret doing it, because I made the decision myself. There was no one forcing me to do it."

A significant factor contributing to his opportunity to "get away from reality" was that he lived in the non-Islamic environment of the university student residences, and could participate in the sometimes "wild" social life there, away from any cultural or family "supervision." His most enjoyable experience, he said, was "having a good time" with friends.

For example, once there was a big night at the college, and there was a disgusting DJ up there, so we decided to have our own party in our own corridor. So we had a party in the corridor, and we had more people in our corridor than the college had in the big room, up where the DJ was. So, we do bizarre things, sometimes out of the blue, something no one would expect. We are not a totally outgoing group, but we are not totally conservative, I guess. The college has its own outgoing idiots, and then it has got the nerds. So we come somewhere in between. Sometimes we compete with the nerds, and sometimes with the idiots.

The multi-cultural mix of his friends, and the fact that most were non-Muslims, however, seemed to contribute to a shift away from Islam as a moral reference point. He now identified strongly with non-Muslims, even referring to his circle of friends as "family."

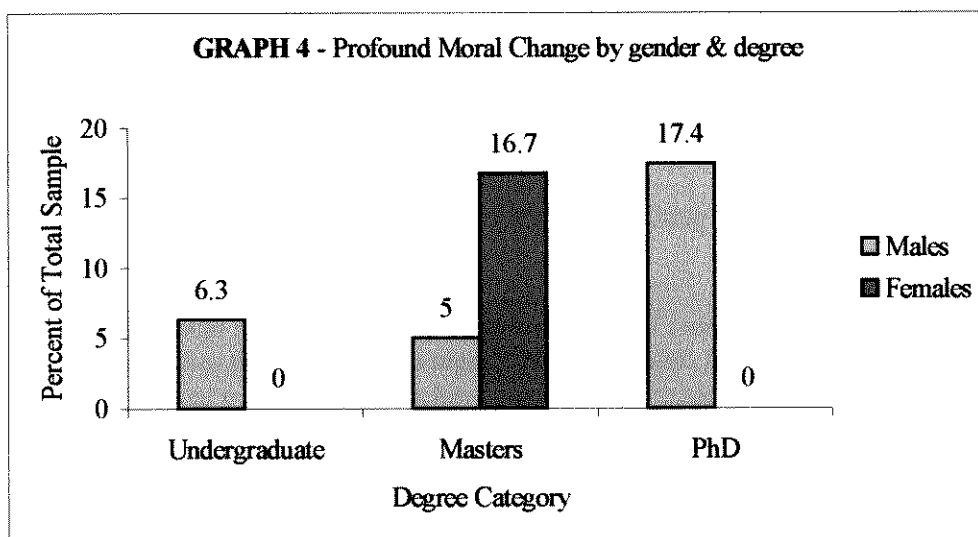
We are a group of about...regulars, about five or six of us. It is a very bizarre group. One is a Polish ethnic, one is Japanese, one is from Adelaide - but he lived most of his life in Europe. So we are quite a group of friends. Then we have a Mauritian friend, and a few Australians. It is a good mix. All of us are doing different things. One is doing his PhD in Engineering, one is doing Science, one is doing his PhD in Biology. We have got a different mix, doing different things, but with something in common. Probably maybe because we live in one corridor, and we are now sort of a family.

PROFOUND MORAL CHANGE

A third category of response consists of those students who experienced "profound" moral change during their time in the West. These changes indicated students had become very Western in terms of their moral foundation, values or ideas. In Sample (A), three students (7.5%), and in Sample (B), four students (10%), for a combined total of seven students (8.7%), indicated they had experienced profound change to their moral values and/or ideas.

More males (10% of total males) than females (4.8% of total females) reported that they had experienced profound moral change. Among the males, the PhD level students had the highest percentage (17.4% of male PhD's) that experienced profound change, while among the females, the Masters level students had the highest percentage (16.7% of female Masters students) that experienced profound change.

The following graph illustrates the Profound Moral Change response according to gender and degree.



In order to illustrate some of the ways the moral values of students in this category were changed, and some of the themes that emerged as they recounted their experiences in the West, the following three accounts from Sample (A) have been selected.

There were three factors that appeared to play a role in the moral change experienced by these students.

1) **Weak Islamic foundation**

One factor that played an important role in the profound change experienced by one student (4: Mauritius, male, 21, Undergraduate, 2 years) was that he did not have a strong Islamic foundation or background; Islamic values were not a major influence in his society, and did not play a significant part in his - or his family's - lifestyle. For this student, Islam appeared to be more a cultural identity than a source of absolute moral truths. As a result, with the moral and cultural constraints of family and culture suddenly absent, he really seemed to enjoy indulging in the experiences available here. As he stated, "I have got more freedom, due to the fact that I live here and am not answerable to anyone else. Whereas, over there I had to give answers to my parents, things like that, you know."

There were a number of indicators that Islamic values played a very minor role in this student's life here, and, as a result that he had shifted towards a Western humanist basis for his moral values. First, he increased the frequency of his visits to discos and began going to nightclubs.

I don't go to movies because I find, like, if I had two or three hours to spare, I would prefer to go to a nightclub instead of a movie. Last year I spent most of my time in *Mooseheads*. And I really like *Pandoras*, because I have got a free ticket...because I live on campus, and they have this deal.

Although he had gone to a disco a few times back home, the brakes had really come off here, and he now went to nightclubs "every week", something he would not have been able to do at home.

My parents would not have appreciated that, because, I mean...I don't think any parent really likes their kid to go to nightclubs every week. My parents, as such, never really liked me to go to nightclubs, because they think they are evil. But here I can do it.

Despite the fact that he was aware he was violating Islamic moral principles by going, and knew that he was being influenced, he still went, however. To this student, it seemed, there was now very little room for Islamic values in his decision making process, even though he often spoke of what a Muslim perspective would be in regards to various activities. He knew it was considered wrong to go nightclubs, for example, because,

Being in a night-club is an influence for you...its a temptation. And like, you are not supposed to be mingling with females, which are not, like, your sisters, your close relatives...because of sexual temptations, and things like that. You are not supposed to drink alcohol being Muslim, all right. So the nightclub is a bad environment which promotes this.

Although he was aware of the moral temptations in clubs, he also seemed to be willing to consider experiencing other aspects of the club life as well.

Like just behind you there is this nightclub called *Heaven*, which is a gay bar, a gay nightclub. And myself, I consider homosexuality as not natural, all right? So I guess here, you have this freedom, and, like people are more easily induced into that...sort of vice and things like that. Whereas in a Muslim country, you won't have things like that. I don't think people are born gay. So I guess it is only the influence...and, like here, you can have this influence very easily.

Another indicator of a shift away from Islamic values was that he now took drugs. Despite being advised by his parents against drug taking, he had changed his views, he said, and now smoked marijuana.

When I was home, like, my parents would say, like, "Don't go near to drugs. If you know anyone doing drugs, don't go near to them, so that you don't get bad influence." Alright, I came to Bruce Hall. Half of Bruce Hall smokes dope. And I have been exposed to dope myself. I have smoked dope a few times, and my ideas have pretty much changed about drugs.

And, like his involvement with clubs and discos, he was aware that his actions contradicted Islamic values.

From an Islamic point of view, I think Islam would be against drugs. It has been clear that it is against alcohol, but again, it says anything that can make you be in a different state of mind, or getting a high, or things like that, you are not supposed to go with. So I guess on that point, this includes drugs too.

Despite being aware of violating Islamic principles, and despite knowing that drugs were harmful, however, he still took them. This again seemed to indicate the minor role that Islam played in his life. He no longer viewed Islam as a comprehensive worldview for all of life, and a source of moral guidelines, but simply as a cultural identity. As a result he

struggled with accepting Islam's moral perspective, in the end choosing reason over the moral absolutes of religion.

It is not because I am open to drugs that I would say that it should be done. If religion says it is wrong, I still say "Alright it is wrong." But it doesn't mean because I have done it, or I have been really exposed to it, that it has become something normal to me, that it is still good, you know? It's just that your view about it has changed. But it doesn't change the fact that drugs should not be done, I think. Like, I mean, I agree with the religious point of view...that drugs should not be done. It is not because I have done it, or lots of my friends do it, that it is the case.

A further indicator that Islam was a marginal influence in his life, and that a moral shift had occurred towards the values of the West here, was his familiarity and use of vulgar terms one would normally not expect to hear from a person with a genuine religious commitment. When speaking about the ease with which he could have sex here, if he wanted to, he said, "All right, so again here, if I want to (expletive)___ a hooker, it is so easy here. I just drive, and I have a couple of hundred bucks, and that's it...some people might be tempted you know...only just one night of fun, doing some stupid thing, getting pissed, and you know."

Although he was quick to explain that he wouldn't go to a prostitute, ("it is against my principle, so I don't do it"), he still seemed more comfortable among the non-religious Western students partying in the dormitories than he did with other committed Muslims. "I have got quite a mixture of friends. Like, I have got heaps of friends. Like, I live on college, so I know lots of people. I have got a fair mixture of Australian as well as foreigners as my friends." In fact, he seemed to want to avoid other Muslim students, a further indicator of a shift away from Islam. When asked if he enjoyed being with other Muslims on campus, for example, he seemed to stumble around for an answer, saying,

It doesn't matter. I mean, even if I wanted to, there are so few...like there aren't almost any Muslims in Canberra. I mean there might be a few, but, like at Uni, there aren't many. And, like, you have to meet them. They have to be in your course, and things like that. Then, if you meet them, you can be friends with them. I mean, just meeting someone once is not enough to be friends.

And another indicator that Islam played a marginal role in his life, and that a further shift had occurred towards a humanistic basis for his moral values, was in his appeal to reason and logic to defend euthanasia, an action he knew was generally considered wrong in Islam. He acknowledged a religious perspective when he said, "Yeah, religion is fully against that. Like, you can't kill someone...that's about it. Like, life is given to you by God, and life is

taken from you by God. And you are not supposed to shorten it by any reason." And yet, he overruled Islamic principles because reason appeared to provide him with a better answer. He continued, "I logically think that euthanasia should be allowed. I am fully for it. Because, logically speaking, if someone is suffering, and if there is no way of curing him, there is no point of letting him suffer."

Although he realised his basis for evaluating the morality of actions had shifted from the fixed moral laws of Islam to a reason based utilitarianism, he seemed unwilling to return to an Islamic perspective, indicating that Islam in this student's life was like a cultural veneer that could be peeled off at any time.

2) Reaction against religious or political situation back home.

Another factor that played an important role in the significant change experienced by two students was the religious and political situation back in their own nation, and their reaction to it. There appeared to be two reasons contributing to their reaction.

2.1 Religious and political propaganda

One student (23: Iran, male, 30, PhD, 3 years) had reacted in the West, to some degree, against what he perceived to be religious and political propaganda back in his own country. This reaction appeared to be a catalyst for his rejection of Islam as a source of absolute moral truth. As this student states, he has moved away from an Islamic moral reference point, and now evaluates actions on the basis of reason, not religious revelation.

Yes, I think that I have changed some of my moral principles. Before I came to Australia, I usually tried to judge about this kind of issues based on the religious principles. For example, Islam permitted us to commit, to do euthanasia on us. But now I try to understand them, based on social, cultural and personal things. So when I hear, for example, somebody did euthanasia, I don't want to think about the religious rules...does the religious permit this or not. I try to understand this based on the social, cultural and personal decision. So I can say that it had some effect on my moral aspect...Maybe that's the effect of rationalisation.

One factor that played a significant part in this change was that he had come to the West with images that he found were false, images that were distorted by both religious and government authorities back home. As he stated, he had come with fear.

Before I came, I had a different conception. They said that because of your citizenship, because of your religion they would be very hostile towards you. Somebody say something on the street, somebody for example, attack my wife because of her scarf. I always thought that they would be hostile to us, they wouldn't

like us...life would be very difficult over there...and some sort of imperialism, this kind of stuff. And I had a very bad feeling. Even my family wasn't happy about my decision to come. They said that you could have stayed in your country and got your degree, so what's the reason you want to go over there. And because of some negative propaganda, it was very difficult to understand that life and all is different here. We thought that it would be more hostile.

After several months in Australia, and after his wife had joined him here, however, his image changed radically.

When we came here, the first months were very confusing. We expected to find this and we didn't find it. We expected this kind of reaction but it didn't happen, and we were surprised because we expected that, we were ready for that. But it didn't happen, people were friendly. Especially my personal experience was quite different. I found some good friends in the first week and at first I didn't trust them. I said it could be a part of a conspiracy or something like that, but it turned out to be something different and I found them very friendly. It wasn't that kind of attack that we expected. We thought that everyone is trying to attack us, and it wasn't that sort of thing. Yes, the people in Australia, they're very friendly, helpful. They help me more than my old friends, so I change. The picture that we had in our country is not correct.

As he explained, in Iran, "because of the political situation", people were required to agree with certain images put forward by government, in a "formal" or public situation, at least. In private, however, things were quite different. He explained, "When you go to people's home in an informal setting, they say that that's true, that's quite true, that we have a wrong image, but when it comes to a formal setting...there is official and non-official."

As a result of attempts by political leaders to legislate certain values and/or ideas, many people sought alternative perspectives outside the nation. The satellite dish quickly became a symbol of freedom, and a source of new ideas. He explains, "Now some people have access to satellites. It is legally banned - the Government is very afraid of this medium, the satellites. They banned it immediately. They said that if you get it, you will suffer severe punishment...but people do it."

Here in the West, however, he had access to ideas and viewpoints on current events unavailable in his own country. As he stated, "We get good news coverage here." As a result of a government ban on certain television programs in his country ("We don't get American television there in Iran"), watching television became a favourite pastime, and a source of new perspectives.

For example, we watch *Home Improvement*, *Third Rock from the Sun*. We watch them regularly. We are a big fan. We can't understand the whole program but we can understand some. And we watch comedy shows. We are a big fan of *Seinfeld*. Actually a very big fan of American programs. I should say that...And my wife is a big fan of - what's the name of that funny girl...*Nanny*. Yes, it's American. Yes. Actually we are TV persons.

Videos, too, afforded him new perspectives from which to evaluate his ideas, culture and religion, and an opportunity to openly - and safely - discuss ideas with friends.

Every weekend we get some video...*Patriot Games*, or *The Fugitive* - it's my favourite, good one. This is our hobby, speaking about the actor and actors. Especially when we gather, this is the main topic of our conversation, speaking about the new movies, new releases. For example, last night we saw *Independence Day*. We were talking about that. The most interesting thing was about the picture of the Presidents, because in US movies, I found that they usually picture Presidents as a very naive person. Actually, we always talk about these things in our weekly meeting that we have. We start talking about the theme of the American movies, how they picture different classes in their country, workers, white collar, white people, black people, Presidents...how they picture them. So we make up a lot of conversations.

It gives us a lot of new ideas...definitely, yes. For example, one of the programs that we showed is *Video Hits*. When I watch this music, I start to think that blacks are dominating the music industry in US. You see lots of black people singing. So it gives me an idea. They still have some problems in US with blacks and whites, but we can't say that it's through the exploited situation. Not always. They have shown themselves in music and sports. In our country, they always say that there is no rich black in the US...that's a problem. But that's not the correct image.

One of the results of being challenged about many of their previous concepts and images, however, was that they had become "pro-West" to some degree, and were now worried about going back to a situation where access to information and ideas was limited. As he states, "We are worried that if we go back there, how we are going to cope with this." In fact, they were more than worried. As he explained, his wife's change was so dramatic, that she didn't want to return.

When she came here she was surprised like me, for the first two, three weeks...and after that she changed a lot. Now she doesn't want to go back. She's got lot of friends here, very loyal friends. She's very happy here and she always tells me that she's scared about the time that we want to go back.

For this student and his wife, then, their experiences in the West were an important catalyst for significant change. Adopting a Western moral perspective, reason, social context and individual preferences had come to replace religion as the foundation and reference point for their moral thinking. And a shift had occurred in their attitude towards the West (and

particularly the USA) as a result of discovering that many of the images they had previously held to be true were in fact distortions; a shift revealed in the following statement. In a response to a question about how he felt about the West now, he said, "Fortunately my supervisor is American. I am very glad about that."

2.2 Religious and intellectual conformism

A second student who appeared to react against the situation back in his own country (26: Iran, male, 31, PhD, 4 years), did so because of what he perceived as oppressive religious and intellectual conformism there. As a result, he rejected religion as a basis for a life philosophy and source of moral values, and sought after a lifestyle that he seemed to feel a religious worldview had unfairly denied him.

For this student, life in the West was certainly not like anything he had been told.

Yeah, the images that I had come through is that the West is very corrupt, and that when you go there you are treated like an outsider. And, when you go there, you have to very careful not to trust them easily, because in many cases they might just use you. And they are good and very smart like you...not to be really nice to you, but to, um, kind of use you as a tool, as a puppet or something like that. These were the images that I had been given.

Like others from his country, he had developed images of life in the West that were products of government propaganda. This only fostered resentment against religious and political censorship, and a desire to see and experience life in the West. As he explained,

They are something that the government wants people to believe, not something that I've seen as a common thing among people. In fact there is distrust between people and government...which is a big gap, and everyday it is increasing. And people have become kind of indifferent to what government says, and government wants. And in many cases whatever government wants and is propagating, it gets counter-attacks from people. If they tell them that 'West is bad', then they say 'Definitely I should go to the West.' There is something about it. They say, 'America is the worst country in the world', then they all want to go to America. Why? They want to find out for themselves. Is that really true or not?

You know for a while going to Bangkok was illegal. You were not allowed to go to Bangkok - travel to Thailand. Because of these sexual things. So, when they put a ban on something then people become more enthusiastic. We had the same problem with video, for example VCR. It was banned for a long time and people did it in the black market. I saw *Basic Instinct* in Iran. I've seen, for example, *The Last Temptation of Christ* which is banned even here and many other movies I saw them last year here, for example, *Basic Instinct* was the premier here on TV last year, but I have seen in before in Iran years ago when it came up. So it's in the black market you can see that...you can find all these things.

One of the ways the West played an important role in the significant moral change experienced by this student was to provide him with an opportunity to break free from the notion that religion is the basis for moral values, and to adopt a humanist perspective.

I had always learned that it's the religion which is the source of morality and ethics, and when I came here, I realised that no, it's not really the religion, it's the human himself or herself...it is them, that really determines what is ethical, what is not. There are many things that we talk about, and consider them as ethical, which is just a matter that some people have determined...that maybe it is ethical if it is religious. If it is not, there are many things that just people - just maybe in a high class, or the ruling class has done that for themselves, and then imposed it on other people, and said, "Okay, this is moral." And that's just been for their own benefit. So I found alternatives, and different types of answers to my questions. I don't know if I really had more questions or not. But definitely the most important part was the answers that I found to my questions that I had in Iran, but I couldn't see it differently. So there were more horizons opened in front of me.

As a result of his deliberate shift away from a religious perspective, and in an environment of freedom where he could go to bars and discos, and drink alcohol, he became increasingly resentful of the restrictive "spiritual" view on life which he had learned back in his own culture - a perspective that he felt ignored (and thus devalued) the material, physical, and even sexual aspects of human nature.

One way that I've really changed is appreciating life, and enjoying life in its more material way, rather than the way that I had learned...for example, that this worldly life is not valuable and you have to, for example, give more pleasure to your - think of your soul and mind, rather than, for example, pleasuring your body. And, that this kind of material pleasure, for example...drinking or by indulging in dance or activities which are considered - from a religious point of view - as sometimes corrupt, are something that separates you or keeps you away from being a pure religious person. But that really is nothing. I can't think of the soul as being separate from the body. If I don't get enough bodily pleasure, then my soul can't be a really - as nice - as good as I want. I can be a good person in my mind, as I can be a good person and beautiful person. I can have both beautiful mind, and beautiful body, for example. Or I can have pleasure in both.

In the free and easy going atmosphere of student life, where casual sexual experiences are often commonplace, he continued to move away from a religious perspective on moral values, viewing sexuality itself as being amoral, and sex with several partners as just a way of "communicating" and being "open." He explained,

For example, having sex. I felt before coming here...I had an idea that it is a good thing, but it needs to be very moralised. For example, apart from family thing, it is very immoral. Or, if you are with your girlfriend, and then you fell in love with someone else, then that's a kind of immoral or unethical thing, or it's a betrayal thing, or things like that. And I came here and I was with some people, and not really in love with - just different people who are having affairs with several people. It was just the way of talking to different people, and seeing how people see this life, and how they experience that. It gave me this idea, that you just need to be open

with what is in your heart, and what you feel, and communicate it with others. And that's something you normally keep it as a secret there.

Even adultery, considered a serious moral offence in many Muslim cultures (and punishable by death in some), he now viewed as just another experience of life.

If you are, for example, with someone just because you have married, for example, you are not allowed to be with anyone else. But it happens very frequently in real life. Legally it's not acceptable, socially it's not acceptable and it's not even tolerated in Iran. But when I came here, and you go out with someone else, you just need to be open with your partner, for example, with your girlfriend. And even though it is very difficult for both parties to know that you are with two people at the same time, but at least it is an experience which exists.

His shift away from a religious, and towards a liberal humanist moral perspective continued as he described homosexuals, not as a violators of Islamic law (a perspective he had before coming to the West) but as ordinary, nice people who have acted freely to decide their own lifestyle.

Or like these gays and lesbian thing. I never thought of this as so open and so easy before coming here. I always had this spiritual difficult mentality about them, that these are really - that they are unclean, or unnatural or something like that, and try always to get acceptance by being straight. I didn't want to be one of them, and I didn't want to have any friend among them or things like that. But when I came here and saw so many of them, I know them as a very nice person, and that was a very different image, and so that kind of religious thing if you are like gay or lesbian you have to be - you have to die. That's the sentence for being homosexual. I really didn't find it a fair thing. It's the choice...if you choose to be that way that's your life. It's a personal thing."

One of the results of this shift away from religion as a basis for moral values, was that reason came to play an increasingly important role in his approach to daily life. Being at university had sharpened his ability to raise questions, and now he valued being more "rational." As he said,

Being in the West gives you this critical thinking about - and questioning of things because you become familiar with a new world view and you see things differently. You see that different things also exist and they are not like yours. Here, there is more free point of view, and trying to understand the philosophy of things. Questioning, criticising the values. Also, if you don't like something, you just tell them, you talk about your feelings and you are reasonable. If there is something wrong you talk about it, you figure it out. While there, they treat it very - like if something is wrong, you feel guilt, and it's always involved in those kinds of emotional and irrational thinking.

As he became more critical and analytical in his thinking, however, he also began to question his religion more. One of the questions he struggled with concerned some of the

concepts of God that he had been taught. Another concerned the idea that an individual could get closer to God by going to the mosque. For him, nurtured by his new moral freedom here, even music and pleasure were pathways to God's presence.

If, for example...prayer, or going to the church, or mosque, can make me closer to God, some kinds of music can give me the same kind of experience. So I found it really interesting that I don't have to really go to the Mosque and do all those kinds of bending and standing and things like that just to - that kind of a ritual which is more of a habit, becomes more of a habit, that makes no sense to me because it's another language and I just do it like a parrot, I repeat some stuff. Instead of doing that I can have pleasure, and I can be close to God, and I can appreciate the power of God, not that kind of God that some crazies have taught me, but the kind of God that I understand. And I thought that it is quite - it was the kind of change that gave me that - that I enjoy this life more and not have to separate it from the kind of life that is religion.

His increasing demand for rational, rather than religious explanations, caused some friction at home during one university summer break when he became outspoken against Islamic and cultural traditions.

For example, that concept of sacredness which is unquestionable, and you shouldn't question, for example, the Ayatollah Khomeini himself - or even question the prophet, or even question the new leader, for example. It's politically unacceptable for them. Or even among our friends, when I start questioning these things from a religious point of view, or from a social point of view. Or if, for example, even not conform with many of the ordinary cultural habits and traditions that people do...and so why should I do that? That doesn't make sense to me. Or, it's not really something - okay some people who like it should do it. I don't like it. I don't do it. I shouldn't be really pushed to do something.

'This is a Westernised point of behaviour', they say. 'Why have you become so Westernised?' Or, 'You have been here just for three years or something, why do you do that? You're forgetting your culture.'

He also questioned the religious views that he had grown up with regarding financial provision, sickness, and even attitudes towards non-Muslims, now preferring a more "rational" (that is, Western) perspective.

Maybe from their point of view, for example if they want something the way they do it is that they pray that God gives you some money. If you want money you have to work for it. This kind of rationality I saw that here. It's not easily observable there. This is a very simple example. But there are many other things, like, for example, when you are sick, the first thing that comes to a Western mind is to go to a doctor. While there, that might not be the case. For the new generation, and the more educated ones, and those people who have been more exposed to Western culture, it's the case.

And why do you, as a Muslim, think that, for example, non-Muslims are unclean? For example, if you touch them, and your hand is wet, or their hand is wet, and you shake hands, then you have to wash your hands again after doing that. And it was

always a horrible, horrible feeling for me, especially when I grew up a little bit more. I couldn't understand why the person who is like me who is...If there is an infectious disease or a contagious disease, for example...okay, that makes sense. Don't touch this person or you'll get this kind of disease. Or if there is some kind of pollution, or filth, dirt...okay, don't touch this person because he or she is dirty, and you might get that. But a person who has been, for example, healthy, and who has taken a shower, and is a very clean, nice person, and has just washed his or her hands, and I'm shaking hands...then what's wrong with that? Why should I really wash my hand, and why should this person be unclean just because he or she doesn't believe in what I believe?

For this student, then, the West provided an important setting for a comprehensive shift away from religion as a moral foundation and life philosophy, to a humanistic rationalism that endorsed multiple perspectives on moral "norms." As he concluded,

You don't have to believe in God, or believe in a specific text to really be able to live your life. I can believe in whatever I like, and I can practice what I want without feeling ashamed or embarrassed here. There are many other people who are living their lives who are not corrupt. They are very nice people. They are understanding. They are human beings like us, if not better, and they don't believe in what we do - or maybe not practice. And there are many other things that are common. It doesn't matter if we have any religion or not, if we are Muslim, or Christian, or religious, or atheist or anything. There are many things in common. It's not just the way we look, our body shape, it's not just that. There are many things just in our mind that are very common, and very similar, and we can communicate it to people.

And would he tell his Muslims friends to come here?

Definitely! Yeah, definitely! I would say to all of them "Go and see that it's not just how you see the world that works. There are many other ways the world works and you don't know it, just go there and just see. It doesn't matter if you want to change or not, just go there and see that there are many other ways that work." So I definitely recommend people to go out, definitely, and see that there is no such thing as the narrow view of the world like we have.

Summary

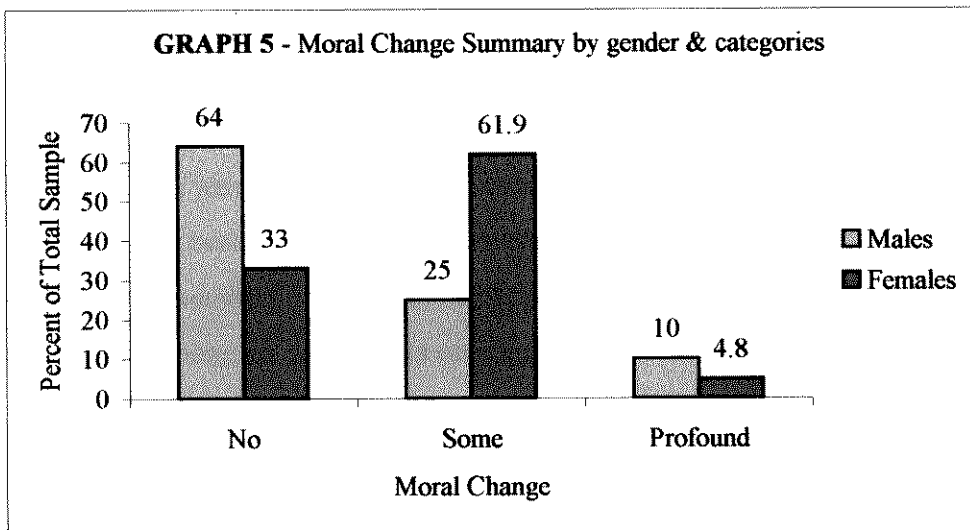
This chapter had three specific objectives:

- 1) To examine in detail the nature and extent of changes to the moral foundation, values or ideals of Muslim students living in a Western cultural milieu.
- 2) To analyse some of the reasons why students responded to the moral values of the West in the way they did, and illustrate some of the themes and patterns visible in their responses.
- 3) To discuss the extent to which the Westernisation thesis is a valid and suitable framework for explaining the moral changes that occurred.

This study has shown that there were three categories of response among the students to the culture and moral values of the West:

- A) Students who experienced *NO MORAL CHANGE*.
- B) Students who experienced *SOME MORAL CHANGE*.
- C) Students who experienced *PROFOUND MORAL CHANGE*.

The following graph illustrates the extent of moral change according to gender and categories.



NO MORAL CHANGE

This study has shown that forty-five students (56.3%) experienced no change to their moral ideas or values during their time at university in the West. This finding would indicate that they had not become "Westernised" in any way during their time in Australia. In fact, some in this group viewed their time in the West as an opportunity to re-affirm and re-commit themselves to their own Islamic ideas and values.

More males (64% of total males) reported that they had experienced no moral change than females (33% of total females). Among the males, the Undergraduate degree category had the highest percentage of students that experienced no moral change (75% of male Undergraduates), while among the females, the PhD category had the highest percentage of students (50% of female PhD's) that experienced no moral change.

There were a number of factors that appeared to play an important role in the experiences of these students. First, some were **apprehensive** about their time here in Australia, especially those who were married, and had children with them. Worry was a common theme, particularly concerning the moral and cultural influence of the West upon the Islamic religious and cultural values of their children.

Second, some were very **guarded** towards life in the West, fearing that their Islamic values might be compromised. While appreciating many features of life in the West, and particularly its freedom, these students were often reluctant to participate in many social and cultural activities. Most had limited social contact with non-Muslims, but instead made concerted efforts to seek friendships among other Muslim students. A common theme among these students was that the Western social environment was either undesirable, or morally "dangerous", because of the easy access to alcohol, the close association with the opposite sex that university life afforded, or because of the party, sex, and drug mentality that was prevalent among some students on campus.

Third, some students had come to the West with an **insular mentality**; they appeared to want only to acquire as much of the West's knowledge and technology as possible, and then to return home morally and culturally intact. As a result, they had minimal contact with non-Muslims, and, like those in the guarded category, did not participate in activities and events that might expose them to Western culture and moral values.

Fourth, some students viewed the culture and morality of the West as **inferior**, largely because they felt there was too much freedom here. As one student commented, "You can do anything here." As a result, some developed a judgemental attitude, avoided social contact with non-Muslims, and were outspoken in suggesting changes that would make the West a better place.

SOME MORAL CHANGE

This study has shown that twenty-eight students (35%) experienced some moral change during their time at university in the West. A greater percentage of females (61.9% of total females) than males (25% of total males) experienced some moral change. One possible reason for this was that single female students were able to experience a level of personal

freedom and mobility in the West that was not available to them in their own societies. As a result, many developed an admiration for the West, and consequently were much more open to adopt some of the West's values. Interestingly, five out of the fourteen females interviewed were studying in the same university in a demography degree course that emphasised more personal freedom and control over reproductive decision making for females in South and South East Asian cultures.

Among the males, the Masters degree category had the highest percentage of students who experienced some moral change (45% of male Masters students), while among the females, the Undergraduate category had the highest percentage of students (80% of female Undergraduates) who reported some moral change. One possible explanation for the high percentage of female Undergraduate students that experienced some moral change is that since this was their first degree, they had not been outside their own Islamic culture before, and thus were more likely to be attracted to some of the West's values - such as increased personal freedom for women.

Some of the changes indicating a shift towards a distinctly Western moral perspective include:

- 1) Change in the **foundation** for moral ideas and values. Following an Enlightenment pattern, some students experienced a shift from a theistic ("Sacred") to a humanistic ("Profane") foundation for moral ideas and values. As a result:
 - They no longer viewed religion as the source of absolute moral truths; rather, the individual became not only the sole, but also sufficient source of moral values.
 - They rejected the idea of universal moral truths, valid for all time, now believing that moral truths are relative to time and place, and depend on individual perspective, or preference for their validity.
 - Reason and utility became important as criteria for evaluating the morality of actions. Actions once considered morally right because they were in harmony with the revealed will of God in the Qur'an, were now considered morally right on the basis of whether they were reasonable, and/or useful.

There were a number of factors that appeared to contribute to these changes. First, these students had come to the West with a questioning mind, and an attitude to learn as much in

the West as they could. In general, they viewed the West less a place of moral danger, than a place to encounter new perspectives and ideas. Second, they were open to new experiences in the West, such as having many non-Muslim friends. Several had even sought after accommodation with students and families from other religious traditions.

- 2) Change in the **content, priority, or ranking** of moral ideas and values. Some of these changes represented a return or re-commitment to Islamic values (such as honesty, integrity and humility), while others indicated students had adopted Western moral values or ideas. Some of the changes indicating a Westernised perspective include:
- A shift in priority away from doing the will of God, to helping fulfil the conditions for human happiness and freedom.
 - A new appreciation for tolerance, and acceptance of non-Muslim views and perspectives.
 - A new desire to confront tradition, and question religious moral values and ideas.
 - An increase in the value and ranking of personal freedom and liberty, especially for women.
 - A shift towards individualism, including a new perspective on the value of the individual and the importance of meeting his/her needs and desires, rather than just on meeting the needs of the community.

One factor that appeared to contribute significantly to the changes experienced by these students was that many had developed an **admiration** for some of the values they found in the West, and had consequently re-evaluated some of their own Islamic perspectives. A common theme among this group was an appreciation of the extent of personal freedom available to individuals here, and the desire to see more freedom back in their own cultures.

Some also expressed the desire to take back what they had seen and learned here in order to help in the development of their own societies. Another common theme among this group was that some of the values of the West were superior to those in their own Islamic societies. Their admiration was usually accompanied by criticism of the moral failings of their own societies. Several became so impressed by the West that they had no desire to return home to their countries, and would stay in Australia if the opportunity arose.

- 3) **Change in moral behaviour and lifestyle.** Some of these changes include going to discos, nightclubs and wild student parties, and drinking alcohol. In the Muslim world in general, participating in these activities would indicate that an individual had become significantly Westernised in behaviour.

One of the factors that contributed to the changes experienced by this group was that they appeared to be experimenting with some of the Western social and cultural activities unavailable (or unacceptable) back home. These students sometimes took full advantage of the significant individual freedom available here to participate in what they knew were "forbidden" activities back in an Islamic context.

One theme that emerged among these students was relief that they were no longer under the watchful eye of parents or society. Another was an emphasis on individual freedom, rather than on moral duty and obligation to uphold Islamic values. And a third was a desire for happiness and gratification, rather than doing "what is right."

PROFOUND MORAL CHANGE

This study has shown that seven students (8.7%) experienced profound change to their moral ideas and/or values since coming to the West to study. A greater percentage of males (10% of total males) than females (4.8% of total females) reported that they had experienced profound moral change. This finding may be due more to the religio/political circumstances back in the home country of these students than to gender differences. Among the males, the PhD category had the highest percentage (17.4% of male PhD's) that experienced profound change, while among the females, the Masters degree category had the highest percentage (16.7% of female Masters students) that experienced profound change.

Many of the changes indicated that these students had become significantly Western here. Some of these changes include:

- 1) **Change in moral behaviour and lifestyle.** For one student, living in the West was like having a licence to indulge in whatever activities he desired. He now went to nightclubs every week, drank alcohol to the point of getting "totally" drunk on a frequent basis, spoke in vulgar, suggestive terms, and even took illegal drugs (marijuana).

There were two factors that played an important role in the moral change experienced by this student. First, he appeared to have only a minimal commitment to Islamic moral values and ideals. For him, Islam was little more than a cultural identity, not a source of moral absolutes. Second, Islamic values had little influence back in his home culture and among his family members. As a result, with the moral and cultural constraints of family and society absent, there was little to prevent him from indulging in whatever activities he wished.

- 2) Change to the **foundation** for moral ideas and values. For one student, being in the West presented an opportunity to reject religion as the source of universal moral truths. Although he remained committed to Islam in practice, he no longer viewed religion as the basis for moral values - a distinctly Western humanist perspective.

One factor that played a role in the change experienced by this student was that he had reacted against what he perceived as religious and political propaganda back in his own country. After discovering that images of the West they had been taught back home were false, and being impressed by the unrestricted access (through the media) to information and entertainment they had here, he abandoned an absolute obedience to Islamic perspectives.

- 3) Change in the foundation for a philosophy for life. One student experienced significant moral change because he had abandoned many aspects of a religious worldview altogether. Although he still considered himself a Muslim, for this student, religion was no longer a suitable foundation for a philosophy of life, and, consequently, as a basis for moral values.

One factor that played a role in the change experienced by this student was that he was angry at what he viewed as the oppressive religious and intellectual controls in his own country. As a result, he took advantage of every opportunity in the West to seek after a lifestyle that he seemed to feel a religious worldview had unfairly denied him.

In summary, then, this study has shown that while the majority of students (56.3%) rejected the moral values of the West, and remained committed to their own Islamic ideals, for some (43.7%), their experiences in the West were a catalyst for moral change, most shifting towards distinctly Western moral ideas and values.

Interestingly, when many of these students were asked directly if they had become Westernised, none of the students who experienced change to their moral values and ideas felt that they had, although several said that their families and friends back home had commented how "Westernised" they had become during their time in Australia. These comments had been surprising to several of these students, because they had felt, in fact, that they had actually become **more Islamic** here, and proceeded to explain that they now went to the mosque more frequently than when they were back home, or said their prayers more regularly. In terms of their moral values and ideas, however, it was clear that many had adopted a Western moral perspective, although they were often either unaware that they had done so, or reluctant to admit it.

Based on the changes that occurred, then, it would appear that these Muslim students (that is, 43.7%) had indeed become "Westernised" in various ways in terms of their moral values and/or ideas during their time at universities in Australia.

These findings have an important implication for the current understanding of "Westernisation." It would appear that the approach taken in much of the research on Westernisation to date has been too narrow, being concerned mainly with "external" changes - that is, changes to behaviour, clothing, artefacts etcetera. The current understanding and definition has failed to take into consideration the important changes that can occur to the moral **perspective** and **ideas** of an individual, even if that individual's **behaviour** remains the same.

This study has shown that one of the most significant implications of intercultural contact between Muslim students and the West is that changes to moral ideas and values can occur, and that these changes can best be described as a "Westernisation of the mind." While Westernisation as a theoretical framework has been largely ignored in some contemporary analyses of socio-cultural change - and superseded by "globalisation" in others - it is, nonetheless, a valid and useful framework for explaining aspects of moral change among Muslim students in the contemporary interchange between the Islamic world and the West, and must not be overlooked.

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1. Muhammad Asad, Islam at the Crossroads, Ashraf Press, Lahore, 1975.
 2. Huntington argues that one Western notion rejected by non-Western societies is the idea of an emerging "universal civilisation" (rejected, presumably, because it implies a universal set of moral values). Asian societies (including Islamic ones) also reject universalism because of their "particularism", he says, which is "an emphasis on what distinguishes one people from another" (Huntington, 1993:40-41).
 3. See Harry C. Triandis, "Cross-Cultural Studies of Individualism and Collectivism", Nebraska Symposium on Motivation, Vol. 37, 1989, pp. 41-133.
 4. Scruton argues, "The Enlightenment was prodigious of political theory, much of it liberal, universalist, secular, and anti-authoritarian" (Scruton, 1982:149). Hamilton writes that Enlightenment thinkers were "virulent" anti-clerics, who were "opposed to traditional religious authority" in particular, and who stressed the need "for secular knowledge free of religious orthodoxies" (Hamilton, 1992:22).
 5. Scruton writes, that the Enlightenment involved "the spread of instrumental rationality to every sphere of life" (Scruton, 1982:266). According to Hans Mol, in the contemporary world, Western culture continues to be influenced and shaped by what he calls the West's "individual/rational value orientations." He explains, "In Australia, as in other Western nations, the ambiguous place of religion reflects the individual/rational value orientations of Western society" (Mol, 1971:301).
 6. As Scruton explains, humanism "emphasises man not only as the **sole** but also the **sufficient** source of all values" (Scruton, 1982:209). And for humanism, "the moral atheist is the type of the enlightened man" (Ibid. p. 209).
 7. As Colson explains, "Moral relativism is a view that if nature is all there is, then there is no transcendent source of moral truth, and we are left to construct morality on our own. Every principle is reduced to a personal preference" (Colson, 1999:21).
 8. Utilitarianism sees moral action in terms of its utility - and utility in terms of whether something helps to produce human happiness or to reduce human suffering.
 9. As moral reasoning during the Enlightenment moved away from a religious foundation, happiness, prosperity and fulfilment - not obedience to the will of God - became the primary focus of human endeavour.
 10. An opposition to "traditional constraints on beliefs...social interaction...and sexuality" (Hamilton, 1992:22). Humanism favours liberty, a liberal outlook, and democratic institutions.
 11. The idea that "the human social condition could be improved by the application of science and reason, and would result in an ever-increasing level of happiness and well-being" (Hamilton, 1992:21). Another writer, Frank Darling argues that "the Western concept of progress" involved "pursuing higher living standards...the continual acquisition of material goods...and...achievement consciousness" (Darling, 1979:231).
 12. The concept that "the individual is the starting point for all knowledge and action, and that individual reason cannot be subjected to a higher authority" (Hamilton, 1992:22). Individualism prioritises the needs and desires of individuals, rather than the welfare of the community and society.

13. The notion that diverse viewpoints and perspectives should be treated equally, because "all human beings are essentially the same, despite their religious or moral convictions" (Hamilton, 1992:22).

14. As Bocock explains, "The Enlightenment thinkers had hoped that science could replace religion as a basis for moral values, and thus provide the foundation for a new culture, a modern civilisation" (Bocock, 1992:258-259).

15. Several authors define Westernisation as...

- a) "Those past and present cultural, political, religious, and socio-economic factors from Europe and North America that determine or facilitate ways of thinking, feeling, and acting consonant with those cultures" (Fortner, 1993:14).
- b) "The values, behaviour and institutions induced by specific Western influences" (Darling, 1979:xxi).
- c) "The importation of customs and institutions thought to be characteristic of 'the West'" (Scruton, 1982:493).

16. While no attempt was made to interview the children, it would seem that the degree of cultural influence upon them was as much a factor of the parents' attitude toward the West and its culture, as it was to the West itself. Further research focusing specifically upon the children of Muslim students is needed in order to confirm these findings.

17. Emile Durkheim argued in The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, (trans. by J.W. Swain), Collier Books, New York, 1961, that in all cultures, there is a division of things into "the sacred", and the "profane." All social formations, he argued, will have some beliefs, values, symbols and rituals which are sacred, or set apart from profane, everyday life.

18. As Max Hocutt explains, "The fundamental question of ethics is, who makes the rules? God or man? The theistic answer is that God makes them. The humanistic answer is that men make them. This distinction between theism and humanism is the fundamental division in moral theory" (Hocutt, 1980:137).

19. See M.T. Ahmad. Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues, Islam International Publications, United Kingdom, 1993, for example. Ahmad writes, "Drinking, gambling, music, dancing and other modes of pleasure are largely considered innocent pursuits by most societies of the world...Not so according to Islam" (pp. 131-133).

CHAPTER SIX

EXAMINING SECULARISATION

The secularisation thesis is one of sociology's most enduring research programs...and long-standing theoretical frameworks (Bruce, 1992:1).

It is possible to disagree about the extent, homogeneity or irreversibility of this trend, and, unquestionably, secularisation does assume many quite different forms; but, by and large it would seem reasonable to say that it is real. But there is one very real, dramatic and conspicuous exception to all this: Islam. To say that secularisation prevails in Islam is not contentious. It is simply false. Islam is as strong now as it was a century ago. In some ways, it is probably much stronger (Gellner, 1992:4-5).

The aims of this chapter are a) to illustrate some of the theoretical and methodological issues associated with examining the secularisation thesis, and b) to outline the approach this study takes in an exploration of secularisation among Muslim university students in the West.

According to a number of writers, the secularisation process derives from the European historical experience (Wilson, 1987:159; Smith, 1995:20; Oloyede, 1987:23; Martin, 1978:14).¹ Despite the relative agreement as to the origin of the term, however, providing an exact definition of secularisation, as von der Mehden admits, is a "complex" and "enormous" task (von der Mehden, 1986:9), a situation that this researcher feels must be addressed, and one that only adds to the importance and relevance of this thesis.

Some Methodological and Theoretical Issues

One of the main problems researchers face in examining the secularisation thesis is that there is currently no "fully encompassing definition" (Wilson, 1987:159) for it. This stems partly from the fact that a) it is a "multi-faceted notion" (Wallis and Bruce, 1992:8), and b) since it is a multi-faceted notion, it "does not lend itself readily to definitive quantitative test" (Ibid. p. 8). Each of these issues will now be briefly examined.

1) Secularisation is a multi-faceted notion.

Given that "secularisation" is a multi-faceted notion, it must first be broken down conceptually into its various facets, and a definition then provided for each. Otherwise, the multitude of "interpretations" and "approaches" to it (Trompf, 1991:241) in use at present will mean (for some) that the term is "too vague" (Ibid. p. 241) to be of much use. The motives and interests of the researcher can also affect the way secularisation is defined and used, according to Trompf, who points out that while "thinkers have converged on much the same phenomena" in attempting to tackle this question, "their answers have varied - being affected, above all, by their own value judgements, and the expected nature of their audience" (Ibid. p. 241). Little wonder, then, that the term is often found to be "confusing" and "contentious" (Demerath and Williams, 1992:189).

The failure to break secularisation down into its various facets, and examine each one separately, can also result in the term becoming a catch-phrase for any and every kind of "religious decline", a situation clearly evident now in definitions of secularisation by some writers who use the one word (secularisation) to account for religious change in what appears to be distinctly different areas of inquiry.² For example, Oloyede depicts secularisation as "a process of socio-cultural-cum-intellectual revolution" (Oloyede, 1987:21). Three distinct and (I would argue) separate areas of inquiry are clearly visible in this definition: society, culture, and intellect. Given that there is surely a difference between a social, a cultural and an intellectual revolution, unless we are given further criteria for determining what the "secularisation" of each of these would entail, how can we say (with any accuracy) that any given society is becoming "secular"?

Other writers too, while identifying distinctly different areas of inquiry, often include them all together under the one term, thereby ending up with a vague and confusing definition. Wilson argues, for example, that secularisation "relates essentially to a process of decline in religious activities, beliefs, ways of thinking and institutions" (Wilson, 1987:159). Again, each of the areas listed (that is, religious activities, beliefs, ways of thinking, and institutions) needs to be examined separately before any conclusions are made concerning the extent to which "secularisation" in general is taking place. It is also unclear from these definitions whether the writer is stating that secularisation is a process of religious decline in all these areas or in any one of them. For example, is secularisation a process of religious

decline in activities, **and** beliefs, **and** ways of thinking, **and** institutions, or religious decline in **any** one of them?

The problem of defining - and then examining - secularisation becomes even more acute when writers do not distinguish in their explanations between the secularisation of individuals, and the secularisation of society, as though they were both one and the same (see L. Shiner's six "religious concepts of secularisation"³ - quoted in von der Mehden, 1986:9). An important question at this point concerns whether the process of secularisation among individuals occurs in the same way, or to the same extent, as the process of secularisation in a given society,⁴ and if not, what criteria, then, should be used to examine secularisation in each? According to Shiner, for example, "The culmination of secularisation would be a society in which all decisions are based on rational and utilitarian considerations and there is a complete acceptance of change". What Shiner has not provided, however – nor indeed have any others – are the criteria for determining empirically the point at which we can confidently say that "all decisions" in a society "are based on rational and utilitarian considerations", and that there is "a complete acceptance of change". To examine secularisation empirically using Shiner's criteria would be difficult, given that it is not clear when Shiner is referring to the secularisation of society, and when the writer is referring to the secularisation of individuals.

Clearly then, the problems involved with an empirical examination of the "secularisation process" are profound. There are both theoretical difficulties (defining just what the secularisation of a "society" or "institution", or "way of thinking" entails) and methodological difficulties (distinguishing between the secularisation of individuals and society). Chadwick sums up these problems when he says,

It is often easier to be sure that a process is happening than to define precisely what the process contains and how it happens. It is easier to be sure there was a Renaissance in the fifteenth century than to explain what you mean when you say there was a Renaissance in the fifteenth century. In this respect secularisation, as a large idea used by historians, is no different from other such large ideas (Chadwick, 1975:2).

2) Secularisation must be measured

A second problem researchers face in an attempt to examine secularisation is that it "does not lend itself readily to definitive quantitative test" (Wallis and Bruce, 1992:8). There

appear to be two reasons - one conceptual the other methodological - for this problem. The first (that is, conceptual) is that secularisation to date has usually been defined as a process of "religious decline", and it is necessary to define what "religious" means before we can then say whether something is less "religious" or not.⁵ Wilson identifies this dilemma when he writes "definitions of secularisation are intimately bound to definitions of religion" (Wilson, 1987:159).

The second reason for the difficulty in examining personal secularisation is methodological. There is a problem associated with attempting to measure "religious decline" quantitatively without taking into consideration the role that ideational change plays in the process of religious decline.

There appear to be two problems, then - one conceptual, the other methodological - associated with examining personal secularisation. The conceptual problem can be resolved if one accepts that a religion is more than a set of practices, it is also a set of ideas and beliefs about the cosmos and everything in it (that is, a worldview). "Religious decline" or secularisation, therefore, must be examined not only in terms of changes to religious practices (the behavioural), but also in terms of changes to beliefs and/or patterns of thought (the ideational).

The methodological problem can be resolved if one accepts that religious change must be measured both quantitatively (how many times people pray, etcetera) and qualitatively (what this means to the believer). Given that quantitative and qualitative data may indicate entirely different things, quantitative change cannot and should not be used as an indicator or proof of qualitative change, or vice versa.⁶

In sum, the three problems I have identified facing researchers interested in examining the secularisation thesis (and I suspect there might be more) are the problems of definition, scope, and methodology. From this researcher's perspective, however, the problem of examining the secularisation process is not insurmountable if one is first, theoretically able to define what the secularisation of individuals entails (as distinct from the secularisation of society), second, if one is conceptually able to accommodate the two aspects of personal secularisation (the behavioural and ideational), and third, if one is methodologically able to

examine religious change both quantitatively and qualitatively. The approach of this study takes all three into account.

Approach of this Study

1) Focus on Personal Secularisation

Although it is admitted that some confusion exists over the precise meaning of the term, when it applies, and under what conditions,⁷ there appears to be agreement that there are two aspects to the process of secularisation; the objective, and the subjective, or personal.⁸ The focus of this study is on the subjective or personal aspect of secularisation. The **first** feature of the approach of this study, then, is in its methodology, in that my primary interest is in what it means to say that an **individual** has become (or is becoming) "secularised" (as compared to it means to say that a given **society** has become "secularised"). This study adopts the approach of Steve Bruce who views secularisation as first and foremost a process involving the beliefs of individuals. He states,

Although it is possible to conceptualise it in other ways, secularisation primarily refers to the beliefs of people. The core of what we mean when we talk about this society being more 'secular' than that is that the lives of fewer people in the former than in the latter are influenced by religious beliefs.

If to put it bluntly, we take the 'bottom line' of secularisation' to be changes in the religious beliefs and behaviour of individuals, we have to build our general explanations of secularisation on a more detailed knowledge of religious belief and behaviour than we have at present (Bruce, 1992:6).

In order to provide for the reader a more detailed description of what I mean by "subjective" and "objective" secularisation, a brief discussion of each now follows.

According to Roger Scruton, objective secularisation involves "the transfer of authority from religious institutions to secular bodies", and "consists in the process whereby religious offices, institutions and ceremonies are extruded from public life - in education, law-making, administration and government" (Scruton, 1982:420). Other descriptions of objective secularisation (seen by some as synonymous with "secularism"⁹), include "the belief that the state, morals, education, etc. should be independent of religion",¹⁰ and the notion that secularisation "is the consequence of the relative independence of the (institutional spheres of society) from religious norms, values and justifications" (Beyer, 1990:374).

The subjective, or personal aspect of secularisation, on the other hand, "is a proper subject of intellectual history", according to Chadwick. He argues that "a study of secularisation examines how men's minds work" (Chadwick, 1975:10). Von der Mehden too focuses on the mind, writing about the challenge of "Intellectual secularism" (von der Mehden, 1986:17), while Wilson explains that secularisation is indeed an explanation "applicable to thought processes" (Wilson, 1987:160).¹¹ H.E Barnes notes that in Hellenic culture, "secularisation means the changing of human mind whereby the basis of conduct became mundane" (Barnes, 1965:193), while Zubaida argues that there is a need to examine the "ideational formation" of individuals, and specifically Muslims in the West (Zubaida, 1995:152).

2) Definition of Subjective Secularisation

The second feature of the approach of this study is its theoretical perspective on subjective secularisation. This study adopts Wilson's "Indices of Secularisation" as its primary definition of personal secularisation. According to Wilson, individuals become secularised when,

- "Religious consciousness declines as empirical and matter-of-fact attitudes develop.
- Depictions of the supernatural become increasingly abstract and its operation is regarded as remote.
- Recourse to the supernatural declines as a means for the cognitive understanding of the world, or for personal emotional support.
- There is less allusion to God's will as the guide for attitudes and actions, and resort to prayer is less frequent.
- Religious symbols lose their vibrancy and meaning.
- Everyday life is negotiated by pragmatic attitudes and cause-and-effect thinking" (Wilson, 1987:160).

Other aspects of personal secularisation used in this study include those provided by Roger Scruton who argues that subjective secularisation occurs when,

- (There is a) "gradual disappearance of religious thought, feeling and imagery from the understanding of worldly things so that religion...is confined to an abstract worship of the transcendental.

- People feel less and less that there is a need to live their lives within a framework that explains events in terms of a divine purpose.
- Religion then becomes a personal matter, where an individual confines his interpretation of the operation of the transcendental to his own experiences, rather than to the external world" (Scruton, 1982:420).

3) Consciousness and Practices

A third feature of the approach of this study is its focus and scope of inquiry.¹² This study examines both the a) religious practices, and b) consciousness (religious ideas/patterns of thought) of Muslims students in the West. By doing so, this study seeks to determine the extent to which there is a correlation between changes in practices and changes in religious consciousness. This study also seeks to know the extent to which secularisation is a valid and useful term for describing changes which occur to both religious practices and ideas, or whether it should be used to describe changes to one, but not the other, or to neither.

4) Terminology

And a fourth feature of the approach of this study is its use of terms for describing religious change. This study makes use of the terms "less Islamic" and "more Islamic" to explain the nature and direction of change to the religious practices and/or ideas of Muslims in the West. Given the difficulty of defining and delineating "religious" ideas from "non-religious" ideas, and of explaining "religious decline" in a straightforward and simple way, this researcher finds that the terms "less Islamic" and "more Islamic" are better able to describe the nature and direction of change to the Islamic practices and/or ideas of Muslim students than "less religious" and "more religious".

Bearing the previous discussion in mind, I now wish to turn to an examination of secularisation among Muslim university students in the West.

1. Wilson writes, "The term secularisation came into use in European languages at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, where it was used to describe the transfer of territories previously under ecclesiastical control to the dominion of lay political authorities". Smith says that secularisation was "a process that developed in England in the sixteenth century with the transfer of political power from the religious area to the state and legal cases from religious to secular courts".

Oloyede explains that secularism, which he argues is "almost a synonym of secularisation" (Oloyede, 1987:21)... "became popular as a modern political system in the Western world after Martin Luther had led an ecclesiastical revolt against Roman Catholicism in 1529 C.E." Later, he said, in 1846, "secularism was formally founded in England as an ethical-philosophical system by George J. Holyoake" (Ibid. p. 23).

Martin states, "The West, after all, is where it all began" (Martin, 1978:14).

2. For example, while Ninian Smart argues that secularisation essentially involves "a drift from traditional religious customs and ideas" (see Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1983, p. 152) it is unclear from this definition whether he is referring to individuals or society, and whether secularisation involves a drift from **both** customs **and** ideas, or either one.

3. L. Shiner, "The Concept of Secularisation in Empirical Research", in Scientific Study of Religion 6 (1967): 207-20.

4. See Charles D. Smith, "Secularism", in The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World, John L. Esposito, ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995. Interestingly, Smith notes that "In the European historical experience, which itself varied widely, the secularisation process coexisted with an intensification of religiosity on the personal level" (p. 20). Further, he states that "secularisation did not mean a necessary erosion of religious belief, either in the pre-industrial age or the industrial. In fact, he says, "religious belief and practice...intensified rather than declined during the secularisation of the state" (p. 20).

5. See for example Charles D. Smith, "Secularism", in The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World, John L. Esposito, ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995. Smith writes that the term secularism "signifies that which is not religious. It became associated with matters of this world, as distinct from those of the spirit directed toward attainment of paradise" (p. 20). Berkes defined secularism as "an emphasis on the worldly regardless of what happens in the hereafter" (Berkes, 1957:43). Just how one could examine secularism in (say) the banking sector in Switzerland based on these definitions, is unclear. One would need to know first whether money and banking were "religious", or worldly, or viewed as "religious" entities by individuals with religious worldviews.

6. Measuring religious practices quantitatively and calling this "religious decline", without taking into consideration ideas and beliefs is somewhat akin to counting the number of times students go to their lectures at university and using this information as an indicator of their interest in "education", or counting the number of times individuals go to the doctor and using that as an indicator of their interest in "health". There may be many reasons why individuals pray less, or do not go to lectures or the doctor, some of them pragmatic and others motivational. There may indeed be **some** correlation between these two features, but it is not necessarily a direct one. It may be that in today's busy world, going to the mosque or church has become increasingly difficult due to work schedules or distance, and may indeed even be meaningless anyway (according to some) when it comes to knowing and worshipping the Divine.

7. Wilson notes, for example, that the task of examining the secularisation process is a complicated one, given "the changing nature of the concept of secularisation and the difficulty of providing a fully encompassing definition for it" (Wilson, 1987:159). Wallis and Bruce explain that "the secularisation thesis is contentious, in part because it has important social implications but also because secularisation is a multi-faceted notion which does not lend itself readily to definitive quantitative test" (Wallis and Bruce, 1992:8).

8. See Roger Scruton, A Dictionary of Political Thought, Macmillan Press, London, 1982, p. 420.

9. Secularism is from a Latin word Saeculum which according to C. Williams, Faith in a Secular State, Fontana Books, London, 1966, means "of this age" or "related to this world" in the temporal not geographic sense. (p. 34) For an explanation of the difference between secularism and secularisation see I.O. Oloyede, "Secularism and Religion: Conflict and Compromise", in Islam and the Modern Age, Vol. XVIII, 1987. Oloyede quotes Trevor Ling, A History of religion, East and West, Macmillan Press, London, 1968, p. 5, when he writes, "The two terms - "secularism" and "secularisation" are almost synonyms of each other except that the former is an ideology while the later depicts a process of socio-cultural-cum-intellectual revolution" (Oloyede, 1987:21).

10. Kivkpartrick (ed). Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary, W.R. Chambers Ltd., London, Vol. II, 1983.

11. Wilson was said to have identified the elements of secularism as "rational procedure, technology and the absence of the sacred" (As quoted by V. Prat, Religion and Secularism, Macmillan, London, 1970, p. 3).

12. See Ninian Smart, Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs. 1983. According to Smart, a religion has six dimensions, each of which can be examined in order to assess change. He writes, "In the case of religions and worldviews it is useful...to use the six dimensions - experiential, mythic, doctrinal, ethical, ritual and social - as a kind of checklist, so that you can approach any religion in a reasonably rounded way" (p. 173).

CHAPTER SEVEN

MUSLIM EXPERIENCES IN THE WEST: RELIGIOUS CHALLENGES AND CHANGES

It is true that a religion outside its original cultural context will have changed (Smart, 1983:173).

The question of the kind and degree of attachment of Muslims to Islam is itself a crucial question (Nasr, 1980:3).

A major task in the sociology of religion is to plot the kinds of changes affecting religion in the modern world. Among these secularisation, as in the growth of non-traditional attitudes, is obviously important in the Western world (Smart, 1983:154).

Background

As noted in chapter 5, as globalisation and migration bring different worldview traditions into increasing contact with each other, challenges and changes can occur to the cultural ideas, and values of individuals in these traditions. As Muslims continue to interface with the modern Western world - and particularly those who come as students to Western universities - important questions are also raised concerning the influence that Western culture and ideas have on their religious ideas, and values.

One writer, Seyyed Nasr, for example, argues that many Muslims have been greatly affected by the increasing contact between Islam and the West, and - given the "intellectual challenges" posed by Western culture - have "attempted to seek their roots once again, to rediscover tradition, and to regain access to the sacred" (Nasr, 1980:9). Other writers like Ninian Smart agree, pointing out that "the very power of Western ideas and institutions", can even "create...a sense of Islamic unity" (Smart, 1987:89). Some writers go even further, arguing that Western education is "an instrument of cultural subversion" (Umar, 1988:93), and that Western ideas can create "militants" who then cause tremendous upheaval in the Islamic world itself. Salame, for example, claims that "Governments now face a third generation of militants, fostered by the spread of mass education and disenchantment with the current regimes. The new wave is drawn mostly from well-educated cadres who had some access to a Western-style education" (Salame, 1993:25).

Some of these "Western" ideas influencing global society are listed by Samuel Huntington, who - while accepting that "at a superficial level much of Western culture has indeed permeated the rest of the world" (Huntington, 1993:40) - argues that Islamic cultures can, and do, remain unaffected by many of these ideas. He states,

At a more basic level, however, Western concepts differ fundamentally from those prevalent in other civilisations. Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic cultures (Huntington, 1993:40).

Whether Huntington's claims are correct or not is debatable, and are, in part, examined in this study. One idea, however, that has certainly evoked passionate debate in the Islamic world today is that of secularisation. According to Muzaffar, for example, "the gulf between Islam and the West" exists primarily because the Islamic world and the West have very different "values and worldviews" (Muzaffar, 1994:121). The West, argues Muzaffar, is "secular", and the Islamic world in general is not. He explains,

When all is said and done, we have no choice but to admit that Islam, as an ideology and a culture, is very different from secular Western civilisation...Islam, it is true, contradicts the basic postulates of the secular civilisation that rose out of the Europe of the Enlightenment (Muzaffar, 1994:121).

As Western culture continues to permeate into the Islamic world, Muslims are affected by the "secularisation" of their societies, according to Nasr, who argues that "the recent process of secularisation...has influenced the degree and manner of attachment of many Muslims to Islam" (Nasr, 1980:5). Other writers agree, pointing out that it is higher education that can/and does play a major role in the secularisation of Muslim youth. Rahman, for example, argues that higher education can cause students to abandon their Islamic worldview,

If nothing is done to imbue fields of higher learning with an Islamic orientation, when (students) reach the higher stages of education their outlook is bound to be secularised, or they are very likely to shed whatever Islamic orientation they have had (Rahman, 1982:131).

And, according to Umar, it is Western higher education in particular that is one of the greatest contributors to the secularisation of Muslim societies. Indeed, Western education, he argues, "was the instrument through which the problem of secularism was brought into the Muslim world" (Umar, 1988:93).

Gellner, on the other hand, while accepting that "secularisation...by and large...is real", argues firmly that Islam is an exception, even going so far as to say that "the secularisation thesis does not apply to Islam" (Gellner, 1994:xi) He states,

But there is one very real, dramatic and conspicuous exception to all this: Islam. To say that secularisation prevails in Islam is not contentious. It is simply false. Islam is as strong now as it was a century ago. In some ways, it is probably much stronger (Gellner, 1992:5).

The general aim of this chapter is to address the question of the influence of living and studying in the West upon the religious worldviews of Muslim students. This chapter will show that a select group of Muslim students responded to the non-Islamic culture and ideas of the West in a number of different ways, and for a variety of reasons. For some, living in the West presented an opportunity to reaffirm their Islamic heritage and recommit themselves to their own Islamic religious ideas, values and practices. For others, living in the West presented an opportunity to re-examine their own Islamic ideas, values or practices, and to readjust them in various ways. While for others, living in the West presented an opportunity to abandon some aspects of their Islamic worldview, and to adopt - albeit in varying degrees - some of the ideas and/or perspectives of the West.

The three specific aims of this chapter are:

- 1) To examine in detail the nature and extent of changes to the religious a) practices, and b) ideas and/or patterns of thought of Muslims studying at university in the West.
- 2) To analyse some of the ways students themselves accounted for their experiences in/and responses to the culture and ideas in the West, and illustrate some of the themes and patterns visible in their accounts.
- 3) To consider whether the secularisation thesis is a valid and suitable framework for explaining the changes that occurred.

Findings of the Study

Despite the fact that student experiences in the West varied considerably, there were three distinct categories of response among the students:

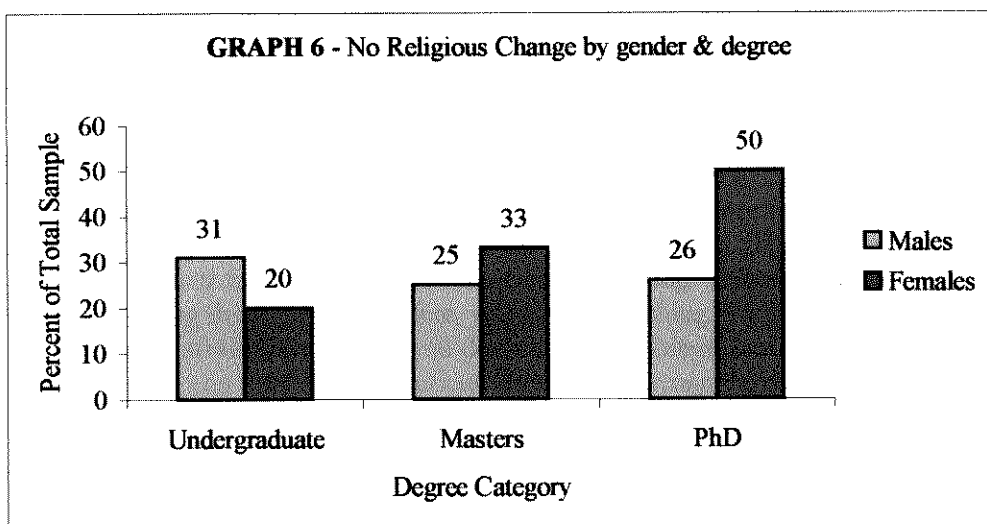
- 1) Students who experienced *NO RELIGIOUS CHANGE*.
- 2) Students who experienced *SOME RELIGIOUS CHANGE*.
- 3) Students who experienced *PROFOUND RELIGIOUS CHANGE*.

In order to present to the reader a more clear and detailed picture of the extent and nature of the religious change that occurred, each of these categories will be examined separately, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data into the discussion. Excerpts from twenty-eight accounts have been selected out of Sample (A) (forty students) in order to illustrate some of the most salient themes. Excerpts from the accounts of the remaining twelve students in Sample (A) were not selected either a) because they illustrated themes already selected, or b) because during the interview, these students did not elaborate on the reasons for their experiences and/or perspectives.

NO RELIGIOUS CHANGE

In Sample (A), twelve students (or 30%), and in Sample (B) a further twelve students (30%), for a combined total of twenty-four students (30%), indicated that they had experienced "no change" to their religious practices and/or ideas during their time at university in Australia. A greater percentage of females (38% of total females) than males (27% of total males) reported "no change" to their religious values or ideas.

Among the males, the Undergraduate students had the greatest percentage that experienced no change (31% of male Undergraduates), while among the females, the PhD students had the greatest percentage that experienced no change (50% of female PhD's). Overall, a greater percentage of PhD students (11/33=33%) reported that they had experienced no change to their religious values or ideas than the other degree categories. The following graph illustrates the No Religious Change category according to gender and degree.



There were several factors that played an important role in the experiences of students who had not changed any of their religious practices or ideas since being in the West. The following three accounts from Sample (A) have been selected out of the twelve students in this category in order to illustrate some of the most salient themes in the experiences of these students.

1.1 Western values and ideas viewed as a danger to Islam

One factor that appeared to play an important role in the experiences of students who said they had not changed any of their religious practices or ideas was that they viewed certain Western values and ideas as threats to their Islamic values and, as a result, took active measures to avoid change. One student (6: Kuwait, male, 30, Masters, 2 years) who was particularly alert to what he viewed as "dangerous" values, said he was determined to avoid being influenced in any way. In fact, he had made a conscious commitment to avoid change before he had come. As he explained, "But if we come with our religion, with this faith, I will stick with that".

One incident that contributed to his resolve to avoid religious change in any way was the warning he had been given by his family before coming to Australia of the dangers of Western culture. Most of his ideas about the West, he said, had come from his brothers who, "all studied in the United States". As a result of their warnings, he had come prepared, he said.

I asked them before I came, how is the life there? They told me there is a difficulty, if you went alone. So I came here when I was not very young almost 29, 28. So I was big enough, not a child or young man, so I am very mature. So it is different. But if someone comes in a younger age they could face a lot of problem.

Some of the dangers in the West that he was warned about included sexual and other temptations.

Well, the sort of problem here for a Muslim, coming from conservative society, coming to an open country, where everything is free and open...like sexuality. There is nobody of your family seeing you. You can do anything. Nobody can catch you doing the wrong thing, so you are free, you can do anything. So, for example, if you are a Muslim, afraid from Allah...you don't do wrong things, because your God is seeing you. So you behave very cautious about doing wrong things. But if, for example, a young man 18, 19, or 20 came with this freedom, and, like he has a lot of money...without any thinking, or wisdom, he can spend.

Another incident that contributed to his resolve not to change was his encounter with other students in Kuwait who had returned from their time studying in the West. Observing their lifestyles and behaviour, and listening to their stories, further strengthened his resolve to remain committed to his Islamic values and practices.

Like, I know a lot of friends who came to West, and they returned almost Western...their clothing, and their ideas. I mean, West has been an influence on them. They will be telling me of these stories, what they did, I mean their experience. They go to casino or to bars, or disco, or nightclub. There are none in Kuwait. They would be banned. They did a lot of bad things...like, have a girlfriend. But girlfriend in our country is a very strange thing. And if you do, you have to hide that because of shame...because people, the family of the girl will not allow you to go with a girl without marriage, or something legal.

As he reflected on the lifestyles of these returning students, he became more convinced than ever that a life without religion was empty and futile. He explained,

But the people who came without good faith could have a problem, because we don't have a lot of these things in Kuwait, for example. We have conservative society. When he is seeing the video, or the cinema, there are a lot of things which come from West. He wants to see these thing. But when he came there, to West, and live for a while there in Western country, he says, "Okay, this is what? This is the club, this is the girl. Then what?"

Students who were tempted to experiment with some of the pleasures of the West, he argued, would eventually come to their senses and realise that only by following Islam would they be truly fulfilled. He continued, "Actually, he understands that the big values actually are in Islam, because, I mean, here they are living like - I don't want you to feel offended - but they are living like...like animals. So actually Islam is the big value. So now he understands, I think".

Having already decided not to change any of his Islamic values and traditions before coming, then, when he did arrive in Australia, he looked for a place to live that was near Arabs for cultural support. The main thing, he said - further indicating his intention to preserve his Islamic traditions - was that he wanted to be near a mosque and among Muslims.

I don't have Arabic friends here, from my people. I don't know this country. I came alone, so I suppose it is better to stay near Arabs. If you want to seek help they can help you. So that is first thing. Second thing was because it's near the Mosque, so I can pray. I lived in the hotel for the first day, then I found an apartment next to the Mosque...so it was very good thing. Yes this from the beginning was very important for me.

And a final factor that contributed to his determination not to change was his perception that the West was in need of spiritual values, and that Islam could help make it a much greater civilisation. He explained,

If the West became Muslim, it would be the greatest nation in the world, because they have the science. And if they come to Islam, voluntarily, it would be a perfect nation. And, actually, they would have an aim in their life. Life here is just money. I mean, money is not everything...there is values.

For this student, then, the West was seen as a place of potential pitfalls for the unwary Muslim who wasn't firmly committed to Islam. His time in the West represented a continuous attempt to guard against temptation, protect himself from challenges to his religious ideas and values, and maintain his religious practices at all costs. This student did not become "secularised" in either practices or ideas.

1.2 The West seen as inferior to Islam

Another factor that played an important role in the experiences of students who said they had not changed any of their religious ideas or values was that they viewed the West as inferior to Islam. One student (7: Ghana, male, 30, Masters, 2 years) who was determined not to change said that he had become convinced here that Western culture was decadent, and therefore had nothing to offer. His statement, "Islam is the best, after seeing the West" illustrated that clearly.

Like the previous student, he too had a view that Western culture was a threat to Muslims. As he said, "Most of those who say they practise Islam, the Western sort of life is affecting them, in one way or another. There are some whose faith is not strong, so they are most likely to be influenced by the Western life". He was confident, however, in his ability to overcome any temptation, and avoid being influenced. He assured me, "there is no university that I will go that it will have an effect on me. Religiously, I am always happy. I don't think nothing can affect me. I only thought if there is no freedom of worship that is something that would affect me."

One thing that motivated him to remain firm in his religious values and traditions was that he viewed the West as an irreligious culture. He said,

I think I can say that the people are not being religious, that is the worst aspect of it. I have seen a few of them who are really Christians, but the majority are not religious. People don't care much about religion, that is just what I have observed.

They think, you know, they think the world is there for you just to enjoy yourself and that is the end of it. But my religion tells me, no this is a temporal place. We have a permanent place, after death there is life after death. But most people in the West you talk to say you have to enjoy yourself and that is it. They don't think much about the religion, they always think about worldly affairs, they don't think what is going to happen after death.

He was particularly guarded against what he viewed as the ever-present sexual temptations in the West, a situation he associated with the lack of religious values here. As he said,

Women are people who can easily convince you. You are not supposed to have a girlfriend. Women can influence you. If they say "let's go out" and I am not strong enough, I just go out with them, and end up going to bed with them, which is not supposed to be the case.

He was also determined not to let the relaxed atmosphere of dormitory life at university interfere with his religious commitments. If he was watching a movie with friends, and it was prayer time, he would get up and leave, he said.

If I am watching a movie, and it is time for me to pray, I will stop the movie and get up and pray, and continue, because it is time for you to go and pray, you are sitting down, or going to have a cup of tea or something during prayers time. One time we were watching the movie - it's like a horror film - a person was surprised, because when we are watching it that person continued to insist that I have to watch the video, and said, "You have to watch the video, you have to watch the video". I say "Okay, I'll come watch it and see what is there". I have got a video, but I watch Islamic sort of things. I don't watch people kissing each other or doing such things. So I went, and in the course of that, when it was time for me to go, I say "Can you please pause it, or you continue to watch it, I am going to pray". She was surprised, and say, "I can't believe you!". This person is very interesting, but at this particular time it is not interesting to me any longer. I got up, so she paused it. And I finish my prayer and come back to it. Sitting and watching a movie is not bad, but if you are watching, and it is time for you to pray, you must pray. Don't forgo your prayer.

From this student's account, then, it was very clear that he would never allow himself to be changed by his experiences in the West. His religion was very important to him - in fact, his primary commitment. He reinforced that fact when he said,

Some people don't believe there is another world, and so they think why not enjoy yourself here, and don't think about what is going to happen there. And see, we have to believe that Paradise is surrounded by displeasures, because you don't want to get up early in the morning when every one is enjoying their sleep. You don't want to get up and pray. But that is something that will lead you to Paradise. Paradise is surrounded with displeasures, and Hell is surrounded by pleasures. Because no one will like to get up this winter at 4am to pray. That is the time when you actually enjoy your sleep. But the religion says it is time for you to get up and pray, get up and pray. So if you don't have the faith, I mean the strong faith, you won't get up, you will wait until the sun is up before you pray. The true Muslims always get up at that time and pray. Pray in the afternoon, pray in the evening, pray in the night.

For this student, then, living and studying in the West provided an opportunity to reflect upon his Islamic values and philosophy, and to reaffirm his commitment to them. As he viewed the West as an inferior culture, he was strengthened in his commitment to Islam here, and took active steps to avoid any situation that might undermine his values or clash with his daily religious practices. It would appear that this student was not secularised in any way during his time in the West.

1.3 Specific desire not to become "Western".

A third factor that played an important role in the experiences of students in this category was that they had not come to the West in order to change their religious beliefs, but had specific academic goals they intended to pursue. As one student told me (24: Bangladesh, male, 40, PhD, 3 years), he had come to get a degree, and then return culturally and spiritually intact to his own country. He had not come, he said, to become "Western".

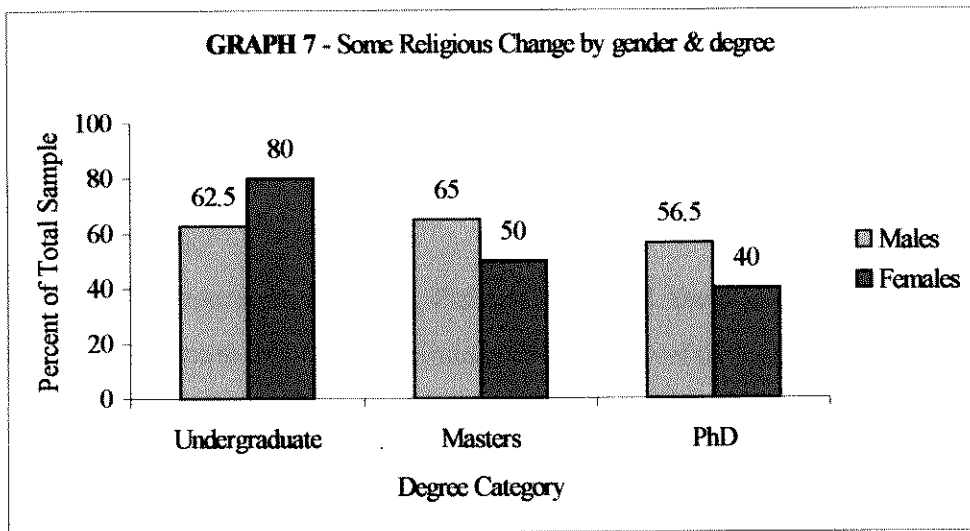
I want to be on my beliefs, because while I am here I should consider it. I am here not to become an Australian. I have some purpose, and the purpose is to learn something, to have my degree, because I've got a job there in Bangladesh, who allowed me to come here, and they also have a purpose, and the purpose is you go, learn something, have some knowledge, come here again, enjoy your job and distribute this to your students. So that's why I am here. I am not here to become a Western people. What I am, what I was, I will be like that.

SOME RELIGIOUS CHANGE

In Sample (A), twenty-three students (57.5%) and in Sample (B) a further twenty-four students (60%) indicated they had experienced some change to their religious practices or ideas since coming to the West to study, for a combined total of forty-seven (58.7% of total sample). More males (61% of total males) than females (52.4% of total females) reported that they experienced some change to their religious practices and/or ideas since coming to the West to study.

Among the males, the Masters degree students had the greatest percentage who said they experienced some change (65% of male Masters students), while among the females, the Undergraduate students had the greatest percentage (80% of female Undergraduates) who reported that they had experienced some change. Interestingly, in general, the direction of change experienced by students in this category was **towards** a more comprehensive Islamic

worldview, not away from it. The following graph illustrates the Some Religious Change response according to gender and degree.



In order to illustrate the salient themes in the accounts of these students, all twenty-three in Sample (A) who indicated that they had experienced some change their religious practices and/or ideas have been selected. There were four distinct sub-groupings within this category:

- 2.1 Those who practised **less**, but who remained **the same** in terms of their ideas, and/or patterns of thought.
- 2.2 Those who practised **less**, but who became **more** Islamic¹ in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought.
- 2.3 Those who practised **the same**, but who became **more** Islamic in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought
- 2.4 Those who practised **more**, and who also became **more** Islamic in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought.

2.1 Less Practice – Same Commitment

In Sample (A), three students (7.5%), and in Sample (B), a further three students (7.5%), for a total of six students (7.5%) indicated that they practised their religion less in Australia than they did before coming, but remained the same in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought. A greater percentage of females (14.3% of total females) than males (5.1% of total males) reported that they practised their religion less, and yet remained the same in

terms of their Islamic ideas. The Undergraduate degree category had the highest percentage of both males (6.3% of male Undergraduates) and females (20% of female Undergraduates) in this category.

There were several reasons why these students practised their religion less during their time in Australia, and several factors which contributed to their resolve to maintain the same level of commitment they had before coming.

As one student (29: Indonesia, male, 27, PhD, 1 year) said, the non-Islamic cultural environment made it more difficult to maintain the same level of practice that he had enjoyed before. One of the reasons he practised his religion "less" now than before, and often "missed the prayer", he said, was because here he had few reminders of prayer times. He explained, "Where I live in Indonesia, every morning I can listen to the radio, and someone preach...But here in Canberra, I cannot hear something like that".

Another reason for practising less was that there were fewer Muslims around him to encourage him in his beliefs. He lived in a dormitory at university, and mostly Westerners lived there. He said, "almost all my friends in the dormitory, because they are not Muslim, well...that does not encourage me to be a good Muslim. So, yeah, I quite often miss my prayer".

Despite the difficulties with practising his religion, however, he still maintained the same level of commitment to Islam that he had before. As he said, spirituality was important, and he was determined to maintain his Islamic beliefs. "I think spiritual life is very important...and to be a good Muslim I think I need a good environment that can support me. So I try my best...I do my best to cope with these problems".

A second student (30: Bangladesh, female, 36, PhD, 2 years) who said that she was "just the same" in terms of commitment to Islam, experienced some problems with her husband and children here that made it difficult for her to practise her religion to the degree she would like. One problem she had, was that her husband, who is also a Muslim, lost interest in Islam to a great degree during their time in the West. She explained, "My husband is not at all religious here. He is a Muslim, but doesn't pray and all that, so its hard..." In addition,

her children, too are being affected by the non-Islamic culture and are now reluctant to participate in Islamic religious activities. She said,

My children used to have a religious teacher come in to teach them about religion at home two or three times a week. But now, I don't have it, and he is forgetting everything...and when I ask him to pray in the evening he doesn't want to do it. He doesn't want to talk about religion, which I find very sad because I want them to have a spiritualism. And I think he's losing that.

And a third student (31: Bangladesh, female, 37, Masters, 2 years) who practised her religion less in Australia, but who maintained the same level of commitment to Islamic ideas and values, said that one of the reasons she practised less was that Australia was not an Islamic culture, and that made it hard. She said, "Less practising because, as I said, sometimes this society is different. In Muslim society, my society, there are more occasions to practice...I can observe that, and do many activities - Islamic activities - but here it is not possible".

Two factors that played an important part in convincing her to maintain her Islamic commitment, despite the difficulties of practising her religion, were, first, she felt the Western world was anti-Islamic, and this motivated her to keep her identity. When asked, for example, whether the West was against Islam, she replied, "Yes, I think so, yeah". And second, she felt Australians misunderstood Islam, and she felt motivated to change that. "I think Australians misunderstand Islam...Maybe we fail to show them what is Islam...Sometimes some Muslims just show what is controversy attitude, so Australian people have a negative attitude about Islam".

2.2 Less Practice – More Islamic

In Sample (A), five students (12.5%), and in Sample (B), a further four students (10%), for a total of nine students (11.2%) indicated that they practised their religion less in Australia than they did before coming, yet appeared to become more Islamic in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought during their time in the West. More males (13.6% of total males) than females (4.8% of total females) reported that they practised their religion less in Australia, and yet appeared to become more Islamic in terms of ideas and/or patterns of thought. The PhD degree level students had the greatest percentage in this category, among both the males (17.4% of male PhD's), and the females (10% of female PhD's).

There were several ways that the thinking of the students in Sample (A) changed, and a range of factors that appeared to play an important role in their experiences.

2.2.1 Challenged by questions

One factor that appeared to play an important role in the religious change experienced by these students was that they were challenged by questions other non-Muslim students were constantly asking about their religion. One student (10: Sri Lanka, male, 20, Undergraduate, 5 years) said he practised less here, but became stronger in terms of his commitment because he felt he needed answers to the questions he faced. As he said,

You tend to become more committed, because you realise it is easy for you to drift away, so you go to prayers regularly. I think you have to. You also have to know more to be able to explain things to people. I mean, in a year you are bombarded with different values, and I think it is almost natural to be challenged by those values. I think you emerge stronger for it in the end. There are things you wouldn't normally question, they are just by force of habit. But here you have to be a bit introspective, and think about things, and justify in your own mind why am I not doing this or that. At least it makes you a little bit more knowledgeable. You go back and do some reading, and ask people.

Despite becoming stronger in commitment, however, it was more difficult in terms of practice. As he said. "The hard thing is that you have become stronger in your convictions and your beliefs, but it is so much harder to put that into practice. I would have done more back home than I am able to do here".

Another indicator of increased commitment was his resolve not to compromise his Islamic principles, in spite of the many opportunities he had to do so. He had many non-Muslim friends, and went out with them on occasion, he explained, but resisted drinking alcohol with them, or going to a disco, for example.

The majority of my friends would have to be non-Muslim. I do have quite a few Muslim friends as well on campus. Actually, it is a good mix. I spend time with both of them, going to Sydney or whatever. It depends on where they are going. You find out beforehand. After a while, they know what you will come to, and what you won't. If they are just going out at the end of exams to have a drink, I will go and just spend the night drinking coke or lemonade.

While he had ample opportunity to renege on his commitment to Islamic values, he had made a decision, and so set limits on himself.

There are some difficulties in some situations where it is a bit hard trying to be with your friends but to also keep within the confines of your own religious beliefs. I think that is the toughest part of being in the Western society. Because you

constantly have to explain to people why. Natural curiosity I suppose, why you can't do such and such. Then after a while the novelty of explaining it wears off and you get tired of saying the same thing to every new person. But within your own circle people get to know you and it works out. There are some things where you are missing out within the social routine.

However, while he remained firmly committed to Islam, his many non-Muslim friends were an influence on him, he said, because their questions forced him to think more about his faith. This he regarded as important, because it helped him identify, and weed out (in his words "unlearn") some of the cultural - and so not obligatory - aspects of his beliefs.

I think they have been influential, like I said in terms of me helping to unlearn about my religion, and to think about it, and maybe weed out the cultural aspects...and maybe see what is good, and see what is bad. Even religious practices...to try and find out reasons why we do things. Wearing the clothes, for example. You realise wearing a cap, or growing a beard, doesn't really make you a Muslim. You think, "Well, that is just cultural. Is it worth doing?"

Some of their questions even caused him to think again about some of the practices in his own culture back home. He had now become much more analytical, and "a bit more liberal minded than the people back home", and was less willing to conform to what he viewed as tradition that was not Islamic. He explained,

The way society operates here is different to how it operates back home. There for example there is a loss of face, your reputation, they give, I think undue respect for people in authority or in position. They put them up on a pedestal. The society is more structured along social scales...if you are up, then you're good...if you are down, then you're bad. When you go back, you break a few of those taboos. You might associate with people who they don't think you should mix with.

And the methods of solving problems. Say if there was a family feud, it would not only involve the two parties that have the dispute, it might have the entire family mechanism involved. I think in some respects that can often complicate the problem. There is a greater social emphasis back there. You entertain anyone who turns up, you are hospitable the doors are open 24 hours a day basically and everyone walks in and walks out. When you get accustomed to having your own space, you feel a bit cramped for room when you go back. And you have ideas on how they might solve problems. You think certain things are petty or really don't matter, and they say "Well, that is your standards...if you lived here you would know better", that type of thing. People are a little less receptive to listening to your ideas.

I remember one of my Aunties saying, "It's well and good, you come here for three months every year, and preach to us on how we should live, and then go back. You have an escape, we haven't...we face these things every day". Then you would realise how much harder it is to break away from the norms. There are some sort of stupid practices like, when they buy goods they are left for show in the house, no one uses them. Like a washing machine it will still be there in the corner, and they still want to wash by hand because they feel that the washing machine doesn't do as good a job. That I suppose is a cultural, generation type thing.

His continued questioning of cultural practices had caused him some trouble back home, however, and he was now viewed as 'out of step' by some in his culture.

This is the sort of thing that I would have trouble with going back home, as sort of having changed, when the older women still insist on the practice and you say, "No, that is not Islamic", and you have arguments, and they say, "You don't know your religion. You have spent too much time outside." There are a lot of things, particularly in the villages, that are so-called "religious". Well, in my humble opinion anyway...and from what study I have done, they are not religious as such. Things they have picked up on the way...like in weddings, they still tie the yellow saffron around the bride, and that is a Hindu custom to signal marriage. But the Muslims do it anyway, and you tell them that it is not proper, and you will have an argument with them about that. Certain things about even basic doctrinal matters which they do, and you would say "That is not correct teaching, have a look at this".

Unwilling to bow to pressure to change his analytical perspective on some of his own cultural practices, he became increasingly critical of some Islamic religious practices, and committed to seeing what he called a new "Renaissance" thinking emerge in the Islamic world.

I think that within Sri Lanka itself, there is a younger generation of religious scholars that have been exposed to this renaissance type thinking, and they have gone back and looked at source material, and they are having difficulties going back to the villages and telling the so called flock that "This is not correct practice. We should do things this way." And they cop a lot of flack for that. Some of them are run out of town...this type of thing. But some are having some success in some parts. And that, I think, goes well for things like women's rights or whatever...because hopefully, they will give them their due, under religious law. The great difficulty here are the Muslims themselves, and the perceptions of Muslims in the general community, because you have to face that on a day to day basis. You have to discuss a topic and hear their opinions on it. That's a bit hard.

Another factor that contributed to his increased commitment to Islamic values and ideas was his experience studying at university. His studies increased his ability to think, and exposed him to ideas he would not have encountered before. And having a new analytical ability gave him a greater appreciation for Islamic values and ideas. University study, therefore, was beneficial for several reasons, he said.

The first is that it has reinforced my ability to think rationally. It probably has a lot to do with the course. You can afford to think a lot, and philosophy-type courses encourage you in that line of thinking. I have also enjoyed the opportunity to be exposed to some ideas which are different from my upbringing. I think that has been a good thing. Like say within the whole feminist critique. That was good to listen to, and consider.

Another aspect of university study that inspired him towards deeper commitment was what he viewed as the "hostile", anti-religious intellectual environment there.

Culturally speaking, the hardest bit is your courses are structured most of the year on the Western style type of thinking. They tend to be fairly devoid of religious influences and things. Some of the courses are hostile in their treatment of Islam. Western philosophy is being dished out all the time. So I guess you have to make an effort sometimes to keep in touch as well with your own cultural background, and do a lot of reading of your own stuff to try and reconcile the two, because you are getting conflicting messages from what you hear at lectures, and maybe what you have learned and thought of before.

Two reasons he gave for the hostile intellectual environment of the university were a) biased professors; as he explained, "In a couple of the religious studies professors and classes I have come across, they seem to be sprouting the stereotypes to their students as well, which is a bit frightening, because they are suppose to know about this", and b) the marginalisation of religion in Western society. He said,

I think religion is tending to be marginalised in its influence mainly because the traditional influences come from the Catholic Church or the Christian Church and that is the only religious influence that people seem to be considering. I think people sometimes confuse Islam with Christianity, because of their general trend towards dismissing religions outright. I think people are doing us a bit of a disservice by painting us with the same brush. That is something I would like to see undone - putting all religions in the same basket - because I think the Western experience with religion, and the Islamic experience have been very different.

A third aspect of university study that reinforced his belief in Islam was the fact that much of the curriculum did not consider non-Western perspectives at all. As he explained,

In terms of the courses I think you expect that they are going to be Western syllabuses. In law the jurisprudence syllabus is definitely only a study of Western philosophers as such, like the liberal philosophers, Mill and Bentham. There is no course on Islamic jurisprudence here. They seem to be very much into this liberal ideology about emphasising the individual over the community, that type of thing. It is something different I think perhaps to the perception back home. The benefit to the community, and the role of the community might rank higher than that of the individual in some respects. Sure, you have individual rights, but the collective good is perhaps more appealing than one person's right to do something. I suppose that my law course was set up as a critique of Western legal systems. So they set up what Western legal systems were supposed to be about, and then criticise it, which is all well and good, but in that criticism they have got feminist criticism, they have class, race criticism, they've got Marxist criticism, and whatever. I don't know why that wouldn't include a critique from an Eastern perspective.

A fourth aspect of his university studies that inspired a greater appreciation of Islam was that a Western education, he said, did not contain any teaching about moral values. He explained,

There is a great emphasis here on knowledge without values or responsibility to go with it. Ethics is one thing that I have found tucked in, in week fifteen, for half an

hour in a lecture, and that is that. There seems to be a lot of - particularly in accounting - a material focus, in order to make money type of thing, at all costs. Not just to make money, but also to do the best by your employer. The education that you receive here in Australian National University, because you do only your field of study, you are not exposed to general subjects and philosophy. I think it would be nice if first year students do like they do in the United States. They have to go through a general liberalised study. I think values are a good thing.

And finally, university study in the West had motivated him, he said, because it opened his eyes to the richness of his Islamic heritage, and gave him a new sense of identity and purpose in life. He summed it up by saying,

From my personal perspective, one thing it has opened my eyes to is that in the third world - and sometimes in Islamic countries - you tend to get the feeling that the West is leaps and bounds ahead in every respect. When you come here you realise that sure they have made progress, but not all of that progress is good, and there are certain aspects of your own lifestyle which are probably better from a personal point of view. I guess there is this thing about trying to reaffirm your own identity and your place in the whole scheme of things, and that sort of thing is the greatest thing you learn.

For this student, then, being in the West represented an opportunity to re-evaluate some of his Islamic ideas, and values, and to commit himself to Islam in a greater way. Although he did admit that he practised his religion less here than back home, it was not because of a lack of desire, but opportunity. Despite adopting a more critical stance towards some of the religious practices labelled Islamic in his own culture, he found the non-Islamic social environment at university to be a catalyst towards an increased commitment. It would appear, based on this student's responses, and despite a decrease in the frequency of his religious practice, that he did not become secular in any way during his time at university in the West.

A second student (24: Bangladesh, male, married, 40, PhD, 3 years) who was motivated towards a greater commitment to Islam during his time in the West because of the numerous questions he was asked by non-Muslims, admitted that maintaining his religious practices in a Western university environment was not easy. When asked if he was more Islamic here in the West he replied,

That's a very difficult question, a very difficult question, because if you consider it in terms of Sharia, then it's very difficult what I am doing. I claim that yes, I am a Muslim, and if anyone wants to ask if I am a Muslim, I say "yes, I am a Muslim." But if you ask me what a Muslim should do, are you doing that, I can't answer yes, because I can't follow all the orders that have to be done by a Muslim. No, I cannot. I want to do it, and whatever I can, I am doing. Sometimes I am in times of praying

or other things I am doing it, but sometimes I cannot do it perfectly. I don't feel bad, because what I am doing, I am doing very confidently.

When asked if he had become less active in terms of religious practices here, he replied that he had, partly because of the absence of mosques. He explained,

Sometimes I cannot do something very perfectly for some other reasons. In terms of praying, for example. When I was in Bangladesh, suppose I want to pray. You can find a mosque everywhere. If you walk down the street you can find a mosque within two minutes. If I want to do it here, I can't do that. It's just not easy. But still, sometimes I'm praying, sometimes I am not doing that very perfectly. If I become very strict I can do that, but I am not doing that personally.

For this student, however, studying at a Western university had helped increase his religious faith. He had been strengthened, he said, by meeting with Muslims from other countries here, something he could not have experienced back in his home country. "But here I meet a lot of Muslim people from different regions, different countries, and sometimes we discuss things."

In his day-to-day interaction with other university students, he was also able to have discussions with non-Muslims. These experiences, he said, were opportunities to strengthen his Islamic beliefs. He told me of one incident, for example, where he encountered some Christians in the library.

I have so many times religious conversations with other people when I was working. Some Christian missionary people, for example. So many times I have talked to them, for example in library, when they were coming out. And they were asking me about church, and I say, "Why? What is the purpose?" They say, "Okay we'll have some talk, with just us. Do you believe that?" I said, "Yes, I believe that. I respect, I have very high regard for Jesus, because it has been explained in the Qur'an that Jesus was a beloved prophet. So I do have every respect." And then they say, "Could you come?" I said, "No, I don't have enough time."

In spite of the challenges to his religious practices by being in a non-Muslim environment, however, he became more committed to Islam here. He had no problems with interacting with non-Muslims, he said, because, "I learned from my experience from my boyhood how to respect other people, how to respect their culture, how to honour their culture, as well as how to keep myself in my own beliefs."

In fact, he looked forward to the religious challenges presented to him by being in the West, because he expected to become stronger as a result. As he explained, "In Islam we were

ordered to move from one place to another, and to see different regions and different countries. Because in the Qur'an it is explained that if you see different countries your beliefs will be strong."

For this student, living in the West provided a unique opportunity to encounter other religious faiths, and philosophies, and, as a result of discussions and debates, to grow in knowledge of/and commitment to Islam. In spite of the fact that he practised less in the West, it appears that he did not become secularised in any way, but in fact became more committed intellectually to Islam than before.

2.2.2 Perception of the West as irreligious

Another factor that played an important role in the experiences of students who appeared to become more Islamic in terms of ideas and/or patterns of thought in the West despite practising less, was their perception that Western people were not religious, and Western culture was therefore defective. One student (18: Indonesia, female, 31, married, Masters, 3 years) who said that she had become weaker in practice, but stronger in her beliefs ("In terms of practice, I'm weaker, but in terms of belief I'm stronger here"), said that she had become stronger because she felt the lives of Australians who had no religion were directionless and empty.

When I came to Australia, I observed that people are not that religious. The churches themselves say that. People don't go to church or whatever. It seems like people like more pop or dance or these sorts of things. I can learn from other people who do not have religion. The lack of direction in their life. They don't really know what to do. They don't really know what's life for. They tend to get panic easily. But different from people who believe in religion, especially when they are really strong in their religion. I can say that most Australians don't have a religion. Isn't that true? Most of my Australian friends don't have religion.

She also said that being in the West had stimulated her desire to know and understand her religion more. And her faith had helped her at university, she said, because of the pressures she had encountered.

Yes, I have become stronger, because of my religion. Actually I have many problems as a human being, but I always use my religion. Praying helps me because we can say we meet God five times a day. And it is a very good time to talk to your God, your creator. This is the time to express your fears, where you can ask for help. For me, it is really helpful.

As a result of observing lives without religious values, she became more convinced here that Islam was the answer. She proclaimed, "Yes. It's a good thing for me, and also for the world. I think so, because human beings are not perfect creatures. They need religion."

Another factor that contributed to her stronger faith here was the university environment, where she was constantly queried by other students about her beliefs. She said, "Being a Muslim, they tend to ask me questions. Like, 'Why do you believe this? Is it because of culture, or religion?'" In fact she welcomed questions about her religion. As she put it, "I like it, because I'm used to explaining Islam to other people in my university and society. So I love it, I love to do that. I am open to see differences. I also discuss Islam with friends who aren't Muslims."

For this student, then, studying in the West was an opportunity to further solidify her convictions concerning the truth of Islam. Rather than withdrawing or resenting questions from non-Muslims, she saw them as a challenge, and an occasion to share her beliefs with others, growing as a Muslim in the process.

A second student (16: Pakistan, female, 27, PhD, 2 years) who was motivated towards a greater commitment as a result of a perception that the West was spiritually empty, was critical of what she viewed as the Western belief in science and personal happiness rather than in God.

Yeah, people just don't want to think about certain things. They don't want to think about God. The universe just came into being with a big bang, the Darwin theory is right, we were all monkeys, evolution - which Islam doesn't support, and I don't know about Christianity, but I think Christianity doesn't support it either. Anyway they tend to be scientific, which is, whatever science says is right, which is not right, because science itself rejects its own results. So I don't think science is the final authority. You can seek answers through it, but it is just a part. Islam says to seek knowledge through scientific investigation, but it doesn't say, okay whatever science says is right. It is just to open up the doors to investigation, to seek answers. I don't think people want to think about God. They say "I don't want to have anything to do with Him, I am happy with whatever I have...I will just work hard for it, and I will get it". I mean, that is true, I am not saying that is wrong. But they don't care about spiritual things.

One reason she gave for practising less ("No, I don't pray more, I pray less") was that there were no calls to prayer here to remind her that it was time to pray, and also that her family

members - who normally encouraged her in her commitment - were not around to motivate her.

I used to pray more back home because there you hear the call of the prayer, and then you feel like, okay, it sort of reminds you. I really feel good when I hear that call. So anyway, I don't hear that call here. And a secondary reason was the environment. I used to see my mother praying. She used to pray 5 times a day. My brother and my mother are two people who are very strict on that. So seeing my mother and brother used to motivate me. Here I don't see anybody, so I don't get that natural motivation to do it. It is not that I don't think it is important, or that I don't feel like it, it is just me being lazy.

Despite praying less, she had not become weaker in her Islamic beliefs at university, but stronger, she said. One factor that increased her confidence as a Muslim was that she learned to relate to non-Muslims, and also to appreciate her own religious heritage.

It has made me a better person in that I am more broad-minded. I can see things in a better way than I could before. I can relate to different sorts of people more closely. Back at home it was Muslims, Pakistanis mostly. Ninety-nine percent, I met Muslims and Pakistanis. Here I meet Muslims and Christians, and Buddhists and Hindus, and from different cultural backgrounds. Even in Australia, somebody is Italian, somebody is Scottish - they have different backgrounds and different values. So I think I have become a better person, in that I am more open to these sort of things. And now I feel that human beings are just alike in the core. The core is just the same, it is just the outer things that are different.

Another factor that contributed to her increased confidence was that in the university academic environment, she faced challenging questions about Islam from both Muslims and non-Muslims.

One thing is back home people don't question Islam, here people question Islam. Even Muslims question Islam. That is one thing that I have never encountered back home. People don't question Islam, openly I mean. Friends can question things to me, and discuss things, but people here question Islam openly, Christians and people from other religions, even Muslims.

She also had access to literature that questioned many aspects of the Islamic faith.

I can find literature questioning Islam and back lashing Islam in the book stores and libraries, I can't find that sort of literature that easily in Pakistan. It is good in that if I want to read I can read. Here I was just browsing through the Co-op shop here and I found a book, I don't remember the title exactly but something like, "Why I Am Not a Muslim Any More." I opened up that book and I read here and there, and I found a few things that were open questions. And I found that because I am a Muslim I knew certain things out of faith, out of the belief, and I have read the Qur'an - not very extensively, that is one thing - but I have gone through it and I know certain principles and certain things. So I had the answer right away, and I put the book back on the shelf because I felt it was bullshit. So this sort of thing, but I can have access to this sort of literature here.

One effect of having to face so many questions was that she developed an increasing desire to know more about Islam so she could answer them. She said,

Yeah, I will get more critical in that I will try to seek more answers. Although I am very busy with my research at this stage, but at some stage I want to study Islam in a more deeper way. I had that desire when I was back home too, but now that desire has been increased, yes. If you have more knowledge then you can answer very well, if you don't have that knowledge then you can't articulate. So I want to seek that knowledge. I feel challenged because I want to give exact answers, and I know it means a lot of reading and studying before I can give good answers. That is one goal that I want to achieve in my life, soon.

Another factor that brought about her increased desire to know her Islamic faith more was that she encountered a Christian who challenged her about her notion of God, a situation that might never happen back in her home culture.

Yeah, actually there are a few things that happened since I came here. In the very beginning, probably in the first half of 1995 I met a guy who was connected to some religious sort of church or something. I met him in the college here and he asked me what religion I belonged to and I told him that I am Muslim and then he started talking to me. He was very sincere in trying to convey that if I want the right path or if I want to go into heaven once I die it is better to come to Christianity. It is just like I meet somebody and I want him to be saved, it was something like that. He wanted me to be saved and he said he would send me a Bible and he told me a lot of things, that if I want to go to eternal peace or something, that if I want to attain that, then I should convert to Christianity.

Rather than undermine her faith, this event caused her to be even more convinced of the truth of her own religious tradition.

I believe as a Muslim I am strong and I am not going to convert into anything, but I felt something for that guy. I thought how strongly he believes in Christianity, and how strongly I believe in Islam, and both of us are trying to see God. In Islam it says that people who go by the book, either the Bible or the Qur'an they go to heaven and that sort of thing. Anyhow, I felt something new inside me talking to that guy. Because nobody had ever talked to me like that, and tried to convey to me that Christianity, or some other religion for that matter, is the right path, and if I want to be on the right path I should convert.

Her experience also broadened her thinking, and she became much more open to learning about other cultures and peoples.

In Pakistan, ninety-eight percent are Muslims, so I didn't have much chance to mix with non-Muslims there. But here I mix well with Christians, and Hindus, and I don't find it difficult. I respect them and they respect me, that is about it. If I don't take pork they respect me, I mean I respect their beliefs and their things.

The opportunity to meet other cultures was an aspect of coming to the West she viewed very positively, she said.

Besides the good education, I think it is good to come out of your culture and see other cultures and how other people think and those sort of things. I know more about Australians and Australia than I knew before, or I can say that I know more about Western culture now than I knew before, when I was in Pakistan. I had been exposed to that, but I didn't have a real experience of it. Now I have a real experience of that, and I can really compare it at different levels. I mean I can compare it to other cultures, and I can see good points and bad points. It broadened my thinking, yeah.

And a final factor that contributed to her stronger Islamic faith was that she believed the Islamic world could become as great as the West technologically and scientifically, if Muslims could only begin seeking after knowledge once again. The current situation of the technological inferiority of the Islamic world vis-a-vis the West was deserved, because Muslims had stopped investigating, she said.

They can seek answers but they are not doing it. I should say not that they are not doing it, I should do it as well as a Muslim. But we are not doing it because for whatever reasons. If you stop doing research in everything, if you stop investigating then, I mean knowledge is just investigation, you get more knowledgeable if you investigate, if you don't then you remain ignorant. So I think the Islamic world is not investigating, it is not doing what it should do. There was a time when the Muslim world was very prosperous, and the Western world was in darkness. And now it has changed, and the Islamic world is in the dark ages, and the Western world is enlightened, or whatever. When Islam was prosperous was when there were many Muslim scholars and scientists that did a lot of work in - I don't know in which century, but centuries ago. You can see their work in libraries. But now they are not doing it. So how could you prosper or make progress if you don't work, if you don't investigate. So that is the reason I think. If I don't seek answers I won't find the answers.

For this student, then, the West was a place of challenge, and growth as a Muslim. She became more confident and committed during her time at university, and was motivated further to seek answers to questions she had encountered. Despite praying less, it would appear that she did not become secular in any way during her time in the West.

2.2.3 Western culture viewed as too materialistic

Another factor that played an important role in the experience of students who appeared to become more Islamic in terms of ideas and/or patterns of thought despite practising less, was that they viewed the West as a materialistic culture. One student (37: Bangladesh, male, 35, Masters, 2 years) who practised less ("Oh, I think less practising,") but who had increased his commitment to Islam during his time here, said that he viewed the West as materialistic and without religion. He explained,

Yeah, Western values is they don't bother about religion. They don't think religion is very much inter-related with them, or religion is a part of life. They think that, well, maybe at the later stage they think something about religion, but at the early stage they think that society is materialistic, so I have to compete with others if I want to be good in society. He or she must have the money, she should have a very good standard of living, and she thinks that means she is good, or she's prestigious in the country. So, very much materialistic. She thinks she should change all the time, changing the car, changing the house, changing the family, that sort of idea, that kind of mentality, I think.

As a result of his perception of the West as a materialistic culture, he became more motivated than before to maintain his Islamic ideas and values, and determined to not change in any way. As he said,

I didn't change anything, any point. Because it depends on my values system, and my religion. I am 35 years old, so I have developed my value system. I think myself very temporary in this world, so I am not very much materialistic. I don't want so much money in my life. I see that I have my duty to my children, to my family, so if I do my duty with the least cost, that's okay. I don't need to be millionaire or multi-millionaire, so I don't bother about that. So at this stage I think nothing or nobody can change anybody, because if people have that kind of values system, he will stick to that system.

Another motivation he had to maintain Islamic values in the West was that he believed his life was being observed and evaluated by God. "So the main thing is the belief that this is not a permanent life, because we are not permanent here in this earth. I'll not be graded on how much money I have, or how much money I get." As a result of his belief that God was watching him, he consciously sought to avoid wrongdoing, he said.

Day to day life of course it's helped me, because it's preventing me to go outside all the time, or go to the party all the time, because, since I'm not going out, I have to do something. I am studying at home, or I am confining myself to the room. So that allows me to study more. And what else? Yeah, if I see something bad or if my mind wants to do something which may be bad, I can restrict myself from doing any kind of bad things because I have my faith in my mind that, yeah, God is taking notes down of everything of my life, and that will be related at some time when I will not be here. So that prevents me doing something. If anybody doesn't believe in any religion, if anybody's life is not guided by any religion, people maybe commit some kind of nonsense sometimes. But if he has something in his mind that constrains him, yeah, like God is watching you, watching me, how can he do that kind of thing? The main thing is that I'm giving values not to this short life. The main thing is I'm giving values to the long life after death. So that kind of thing motivates me sometimes, yeah, controls my behaviour.

Life in the West for this student, then, represented an encounter with a culture he viewed as materialistic, and irreligious. His experiences motivated him in his commitment to Islamic ideas and values, because he became increasingly convinced here of the emptiness of

materialism, and the reality of God. This student did not become secular in any way during his time in the West.

2.3 Same Practice – More Islamic

In Sample (A), five students (12.5%), and in Sample (B), a further ten students (25%), for a combined total of fifteen students (18.7%) said they practised their religion the same in the West as they did before coming, and yet, appeared to become more Islamic in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought in various ways. More females (28.6% of total females) than males (15% of total males) reported that they practised their religion the same in Australia, and yet appeared to become more Islamic in terms of ideas. The Undergraduate students had the greatest percentage in this category, for both males (18.8% of male Undergraduates) and females (60% of female Undergraduates).

There were several factors which appeared to play an important role in the experiences of students in Sample (A).

2.3.1 Challenged to become more knowledgeable about Islam

One factor which played an important role in the experiences of students who appeared to become more Islamic in terms of thinking despite the fact they said they had not changed any of their religious practices, was that they were challenged by the non-Islamic culture of the West to become more knowledgeable about their own religion. One student (25: Pakistan, female, 35, Masters, 2 years) who said she hadn't changed any of her religious practices since being here, ("I think I'm the same. I pray the same here") said during the interview that she had become, "more religious" here.

From her account, there were several ways it appeared she had become more Islamic since being in the West. For one thing, given that her lecture timetable was not structured to allow for Muslim prayer times, she showed an increased commitment here just to maintain the same prayer schedule she had before. She explained,

It's easier back home. I mean you have the facility to do that. And during our Holy month of Ramadan, back home it is like, everything is according to the time. And the way we fast, and in the morning we have prayers. It's a whole routine which we don't have here. So here, on your own you have to have that routine. I mean, one example is like, we break our fast at sunset. So at that time also, you know, you can

be in class, you can be having lectures. So we don't have that facility of, you know, this is the time for the Muslims to break their fast, so they should not have classes at that time.

In fact, she often came out of a lecture if it was time for her to pray, she said, "We just have to adjust to it. We just come out of the lectures. So that's a little bit of a problem." Her decision to maintain her Islamic practices - even when in a potentially highly embarrassing situation such as walking out of a packed lecture hall at university in front of unsympathetic and possibly hostile Western students - indicated a deliberate choice to affirm her Islamic identity in a situation she would never find herself in back in her own culture.

Another indicator of an increase in religious commitment was that she did not shy away from challenges to her religious beliefs, but became more knowledgeable about her religion so that she could answer questions she was constantly being asked.

Yeah, I think because like back home it's, like everyone knows, so you're not put at a question all the time. Here you are, like people keep asking, you so, like, you're more alert, and you have to know the answers. So in that sense, yeah, you think more, and you become more religious. Not religious, but it's like being able to explain so the other person can understand. Yeah, I mean I've been able to think of answers to - for questions on Islam.

And a third indicator that she had become more Islamic here in the West was that - despite being constantly questioned about her beliefs, and having to make deliberate choices to maintain the same level of religious practices - she wanted to use the intellectual and analytical skills she developed here not to further question and criticise Islam, but to add new meaning, understanding, and purpose to her religious understanding.

I mean, like I started to think more in this country because back home, it's like you take it for granted, like you are Muslim and everyone knows. But here, being questioned you think more. And I've been able to think in a critical way also. Yeah, that has changed. That has added a sort of new thing for me.

While this student maintained the same level of religious practice in the West, she also increased in her appreciation for and understanding of Islam as a worldview. This would indicate she did not become secular during her stay in the West.

2.3.2 Interaction with other worldviews inspires commitment

Another factor that played an important role in the experiences of students who said they practised the same here, but who appeared to become more Islamic in terms of ideas was

that they were inspired to a greater commitment by their experiences of interacting with students from other religious traditions. One student (8: Libya, male, married, PhD, 3 years) who practised the same, but who became more committed during his time in the West, appeared to enjoy discussions and debates about religion and philosophy. As he said,

I am getting more committed. I try to approach other people, the Anglicans, the Catholic people, the Buddhist, the communist. I try to exchange my views and at least this is maybe one of the positive things here. You could find a variety of views.

While for some students, university study might be a challenge to their beliefs, for this student being questioned was a positive process that strengthened him. As he explained, he didn't feel threatened by questions because he had always been a thinker. "I question from the time I was in highschool, actually." As a result of his positive attitude towards intellectual challenges, he viewed critical thinking as an Islamic activity that was meant to provide the believer with opportunities to grow.

Actually it is Islam that makes me think. Because to me one of the pillars of faith is, you have to question. I don't just accept things as they are. To me that is the only way to learn. If you paint with only one colour there is not much there. Unfortunately Muslims, they don't look at it this way.

For this student, then, being in the West represented an opportunity to grow in his understanding and appreciation of Islam. He enjoyed encountering a variety of philosophical and religious perspectives during his time at university because they had convinced him further of the value and importance of his own religious traditions. This student did not become secular in any way during his time in the West.

2.3.3 Spiritual deficiency of the West inspires new commitment

Another factor that played an important role in the experiences of students who appeared to become more Islamic despite practising the same was that they viewed the West as spiritually deficient. One student (3: Indonesia, female, 34, PhD, 4 years) who said that she had not changed any of her Islamic practices ("In terms of Islam, I don't feel that I have changed some of my principles.") but who had in fact become more Islamic in terms of ideas and commitment ("For me, in a sense, I am more committed."), came to realise the value of her own religious traditions after seeing what she viewed as the spiritual deficiency of the West.

I feel there are so many problems in a society like Australia. One thing there is something of a loss, the spiritual thing. One of the main things that religion will give, will offer, is the thing that's missing in this society. So I feel there is a

beautiful thing when you believe in your faith, like, as a Muslim I believe that there is life beyond death, and I know where I am going to.

Her experiences not only confirmed her beliefs, but also provoked her to make a greater commitment to Islam than before. As she explained, "In this thing, I realise it's made me more committed. The religion give me so many things, the substance, the spiritual thing."

As she observed many aspects of life in the West that she viewed as immoral and unacceptable, she developed a greater appreciation for Islam.

More, yeah, because I see so many things. For example, something like the relationship between women and men, and sexual freedom, and something like that. They never change my mind. For me, I think the best is you are committed with one, with marriage and all, because the problem of single mothers in Australia is incredible. I don't understand it. I think when I see so many things in society, about drugs, AIDS, gay, lesbian, sexual relationship, you know, I can't really agree. I feel Islam is a more sacred thing.

Another factor that contributed to an increase in her commitment to Islam was the new intellectual framework she developed as a result of her studies. She had become "more critical, more systematical", she said, and as a result, could now appreciate, compare and in some cases synthesise Western and Islamic perspectives. She explained,

Well, I use a lot of Western ideas, but at the same time can compare with Eastern. So for me it's more rich, because you've got a comparison, yeah. So it's not just ideas of the state based on Christian democracy, but there's also the state based on Islamic ideas.

For this student, then, studying at university had not weakened her commitment to Islam, but strengthened it. She now felt she had the intellectual ability to engage in deep debates as a Muslim, and to defend her faith with rationality and conviction. She explained,

For myself I don't have a problem. I am not intimidated. For once, I can speak their language, I can argue in **their** way, so for me I don't really have much problem because I can speak with them. I can speak in **their way**, and that's the difference. If I don't understand then people may put me down as a Muslim or something, but I can discuss, I can debate, and I know quite well about their culture, so we can have a debate and discuss.

Because of her new found intellectual confidence, she also became more proud of her religious traditions, and felt no hesitation in telling her friends that she was a Muslim.

Oh yeah, most of them, I'm always telling them. At the first, some of them don't know, and it's like "Oh, so you're Muslim!" So many friend of mine say, "Oh, before I don't know there were Muslim people like you" So for them this is new phenomenon. They see a different picture of what's a Muslim. I like that role, yeah.

With her new analytical skills, she also became more critical and evaluative of the Western university curriculum, another indicator of her growing confidence as a Muslim. She was unhappy with many of her courses because they often ignored the role that religion played in social development.

Here they put you in a different drawer, pigeonhole, field of study. If you are not doing religion you not deal at all with religion. So that's a problem for me because in Indonesia religion is still a very important phenomenon. In Islam you have no secular.

As she explained, her courses were, "Not anti, but ignoring" a religious perspective. She then illustrated her point with the following.

I was sitting in a class called Theory of Modernism. There's no single theory talking about Eastern ideas on power or whatever in the Western debate...in establishment debate on power. So for me, they are just lacking political debate or whatever on the East. In most of the theory they don't talk at all that there is another place in the world that have quite significant contribution in knowledge. Like in theory...I was in Theory of Post-Modernism. There is no mention at all. They are talking about Christianity, but not what's in Islam. Because they set up the theory, "modern" means avoid, or leave out religion. But for me you can't divide it.

Given that the curriculum often left out a religious perspective, she became more determined to inform herself of an Islamic point of view on various topics. The university setting thus helped her become "more aware of the Islamic side" (perspective) on things. Now she could appreciate and evaluate both a Western and Islamic point of view. As she said, "It enriched me. I don't want to say it's impacted me, but enriched."

A final indicator of growth in her commitment to Islamic ideals and values was her description of Islamic resurgence or revitalisation throughout the world. In the West she felt proud to be a Muslim, she said, and wanted to "stand up" for Islamic values.

For me, resurgence is we stand up with our own values. You can say that you are Muslim and you are not afraid. Because, as a Muslim, for 100 years we have been colonised, we have been...like inferior, because of the impact of colonisation. And after the 2nd world war, most of the Muslim world became independent. And after that we are in search of identity, and at that time we show we are Muslim. So its a very simple thing - to show that we are Muslim.

2.3.4 Studies inspire new appreciation of Islamic traditions

Another factor that contributed to the experience of students who appeared to become more Islamic in the West, despite remaining the same in terms of practice, was that they had developed new analytical skills as a result of their studies which helped them appreciate

their religious traditions more. One student (32: Bangladesh, female, 32, Masters, 2 years) who said she had not changed any of her Islamic practices, but had in fact become more committed in the West, said she now felt a greater need to protect her religious traditions. While she stated that she had not changed any of her Islamic practices, ("No, no, I think same. I say prayer as I did before in my country. I don't find it difficult. Nothing. I am more than busy, so no time to change. I must maintain my culture. This is always in my mind, that's why I am not changing."), she did indicate that some changes in her thinking were taking place, that she was becoming a more "liberal" Muslim. "but I think to some extent I become liberal here."

One way she felt she had become more liberal was that she was now willing to interact with males in ways that would be viewed as wrong back home. She could shake hands with them now, for example, and not feel guilty. When I came here I actually shook hands with the boys with hesitation, but now I don't hesitate because I became used to it. I used to shake, but there was a guilty feeling. But I am doing all these things here, but now I don't have that feeling. I became very liberal, I think, in that respect only, not others.

She was also changing due to the structure, content and method of university education in the West. She had become more individualistic, and more analytical, she said.

Yeah, the system is totally different from my country. Here we have the opportunity to express our opinion, to think individually, and think critically. We don't do all these things in my country. We just normally memorise from a book, and just go for exam. But here we have that opportunity to express our opinion in class, and also in assignments and exams. We think critically here, more critically from my country, which is good. Here we are justifying why we are doing all these things, why this theory, why this is not.

While she said she was becoming "more rational", she was careful to draw the line when it came to her beliefs, however. She would certainly not seek to analyse Islam with her new analytical skills, she said. "No, not about Islam, because I don't think about that." However, despite her attempt to deny that she would ever analyse or criticise Islamic practices, she did just that, labelling as "cultural" (and therefore changeable), practices previously explained to her as being Islamic. Concerning the many restrictions on women back home, for example, she was now actually reconsidering what was a legitimate Islamic perspective. She explained,

Yeah, sometimes I think, you know, about my culture. Before, the role of woman was just cooking food and maintaining house, but nowadays it is changing. Many women are working. They are coming outside. This is, I think, a transitional period. I believe there was a misinterpretation of religion in my culture. Some people interpret that "oh, no, women shouldn't go outside", but Islam doesn't say this. We know that. We can go outside and we can do work. We can do whatever work we like, but we should cover our body properly. We should avoid physical contact with boys and so on. But some people misinterpret these and keep women in the house. This is not religion, it is actually culture. This is tradition. For long years it has worked like that. Now it is changing.

While she continued to maintain that she hadn't changed any of her views on Islam, and that she certainly had not become "Western" "No, because I didn't change anything. I even, I didn't change my dress, so how can they say that I became Western", it seems clear that she had adopted a somewhat liberal Western perspective on the role of women in society, arguing for more freedom for women in Islamic cultures, and opposing restrictive practices.

A second indicator that she had become more Islamic in the West in terms of commitment, was that she made deliberate attempts to protect her Islamic values, and avoid situations that might compromise those values. In one situation, she moved out of her university accommodation because her values were being compromised there. "Last year I was there because it was very close to university. This time I moved, because I'm with my family now." She then explained the situation that led her to move.

I found some difficulties when I was in Toad Hall of the University, and this is a hall for male and female. In my country they do not think of it, we have separate hall for male and for female. But here we are sharing the same kitchen, same bathroom with boys, and so it was very difficult for me. Sometimes, when I go to the bathroom and performing my prayer, we have to wash our hands, faces, everything. And I used to go to the bathroom when some boys were in the dining space, and it was very embarrassing for me to go in front of them to the bathroom, and then come back and to say prayer. It's not good actually.

Yeah, they are also using the same bathrooms and shower, one shower. There is...how to explain. If a boy uses it, you cannot go there, but another time you can go there. But it's better to have a different toilet, different shower than the boys. Sometimes we would lock the door, and the boys will yell, "I'm here". That's the other thing I don't like.

Another indicator that she had become more committed to Islamic ideas and values here was her determination not to let her children adopt "Western" ideas and ways. She would not like to live in the West, she said, because,

it will be very difficult for me to deal with my children because they would try to follow everything, because they are young. I will not allow drinking or I will not

adopt this culture, I will still maintain my culture. But the kids will learn from their school, from their friends, and they will be like, mostly like Western people. But I cannot let them do that, because I'm a Muslim, and I'm from a culture which is different from this.

And a final indicator that she had become more committed to Islam in the West was her rejection of the moral values she observed in the West, and the subsequent reaffirmation of Islamic values. Her religion, she said, helped her live in a more morally upright way.

I don't like things like living together or extra marital sexual relations. All these things I don't like because of my culture and because of my religion. So I believe in family ties and marriage system, all these things. I think this is good. This is, I think, the best thing of my culture, I really do.

2.3.5 More thinking contributes to stronger Islamic identity

And a final student (15: Indonesia, male, 38, married, PhD, 4 years) who practised the same but became more committed to Islamic ideas in the West, said that being in the West had made him think more, and, as a result, he was more secure in his religious identity now. He explained, "More thinking now, and I think more logically. I see everything rationally, and sometimes I am more patient than before. So when I get back to Indonesia, I know where I belong, and I know where I stand."

In fact, the most important thing he had learned at university in the West, he said, was to think. "To think, yes, from the West. A Western university teaches you to think. That is one of the advantages as I said before about the scientific attitude." Not wanting his religion to appear to be backward, however, he was quick to add that critical thinking was in fact imperative in Islam too. He said, "That is what Islam is. Islam is not afraid of thinking. No, thinking is a must. You are not human if you don't think. It is one of the verses in the Holy book. It is only the people who think that are believers."

Interestingly, for this student, the book that made the greatest impact upon him during his time in the West was the Qur'an, he said. "The Qur'an, Yeah. I don't know why but I have more opportunities to learn Qur'an here." Like many other students, he now desired to know more about his religion because non-Muslims asked him so many questions. "I am cornered here to answer some questions from non Muslims. So that made me search for the answers, when I am trying to explain what Islam is. I learn more. It is good."

While he considered being asked many questions about his religion a good thing, he was very firm in rejecting any suggestion that he was now more open to question the authority of Islam itself. As he said, it was fine to ask questions. "Why not? That is a good thing. You should think about Islam as well. Sometimes you can question the Holy book. Why not?" But he was definite there were limitations. It was not right, he said, to ask questions about the Qur'an if the aim was to change anything. "From my opinion I am allowed to question the Holy book on one condition, that I am questioning it to seek the truth, but not to change."

Another factor that kindled a desire to reaffirm his Islamic heritage was the value system he encountered in the West. The university education he was receiving was not a problem, he said, but rather the society was.

I am not scared about the university system. No, no problem. The society, that is something that scares me. The values, yes, materialism, and also secularism. If you say that religion is my personal business, between me and my God, then when you go to the real world, you forget about it. That is secularism.

Having identified secularism as a major problem in the West, he seemed particularly keen for Islamic societies to avoid a similar direction. While he was critical of some values here, others, however, he now esteemed and wanted to see more of in Islamic societies. For one thing, being in the West had given him the desire to see more openness and a more "scientific" attitude, for example. "I think the other one is this scientific attitude, which is a positive value of the Western world. In some cases, openness - an openness to new ideas. I think it is a good quality." As a result of observing these values here, he now believed the Islamic world needed to change.

Without accepting the progress in science, for instance, I don't think the Islamic world will progress too. I think it stopped because they didn't open the scientific world. They left the scientific world, they left the material world. They just concentrate on the spiritual world. That is not Islam.

Being in the West had also given him the desire to see more democracy in the Islamic world. "In some Islamic countries they don't accept democracy. If there is something good in democracy why not take it?" But perhaps most importantly, for this student being in the West had helped foster a new perspective on the history of the world he lived in. Re-interpreting history through his sharpened Islamic lens, he now believed the West owed its greatness to the Islamic world, and he felt confident that when esteeming a value or

principle observed in the West, he was not denying Islam, but rather was actually affirming it as ultimate truth. He believed, for example, that,

the West emerged because of Islam. After the Enlightenment they learn something from Islam, also from the Renaissance. Then Islam stopped and the West kept going. So why not learn again from them, from the West? You don't have to accept all. Take the good things and reject the bad.

2.4 More Practice – More Islamic

In Sample (A), ten students (25%), and in Sample (B), a further seven students (17.5%), for a combined total of seventeen students (21.3%), said that they practised their religion more since arriving in Australia, and also appeared to become more Islamic in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought. More males (27% of total males) than females (4.8% of total females) reported that they practised their religion more in the West and also appeared to become more Islamic in terms of ideas and/or patterns of thinking. Among the males, the Masters degree students had the greatest percentage in this category (35% of male Masters students), while among the females, the Undergraduate students had the greatest percentage (20% of female Undergraduates) in this category.

There were a number of factors which appeared to play a role in the experiences of the students in Sample (A).

2.4.1 The West seen as morally and spiritually dangerous

One factor that played an important role in the experience of students who appeared to be more Islamic now in terms of both practice and ideas, was that they viewed the West as a dangerous place for Muslims. One student (5: Malaysian, male, 21, Undergraduate, 2 years) said that out of necessity he had become more committed here in every sense, because of the many moral and spiritual pitfalls in the West. "I think I am becoming a stronger Muslim here, because of that reason I told you just now. Because of the understanding that I have to, or otherwise I will go astray, for example." When asked what would make him go astray here, he replied, "Yeah, discos, socialising, girls, and all this." He then explained that he was now both "more committed", and also stronger, now being very careful to perform his prayers every day. "Of course daily I pray, five times a day."

He also explained that being in the West had caused him to think more about his religion, ("Yeah, more than before in Malaysia"), and to make a conscious decision and effort to guard against the influence of Western culture. As he explained,

I have to be more careful, and know more about my religion, because when I am staying here, I am staying in the Westernised environment, and I have to be careful to my religion, to be committed, to stay with my face to keep the religion, in terms of improving, the need of teaching myself, the need of improving myself in religion. And I understand here that I have to follow my religion. It is harder here, compared to Malaysia. So I have to be more careful in my religion here.

One thing that had inspired him think more about his Islamic faith was the course of study he was taking at university. He had changed, he said, in terms of his the way he now approached issues, and also "probably a bit in terms of thinking style". He had also learned to think more critically, and to analyse various perspectives. As he explained, "I'm a bit open. I am becoming more analytical, more critical in my thinking. I think more...as I am staying longer here, I am more critical, and I don't just accept what people are saying."

Despite having new analytical skills, however, and exposure to a range of perspectives he would not have encountered outside the West, this student did not adjust any of his traditional Islamic principles or ideas in any way. As he stated, in fact, he was more committed than before, and believed that Islam would one day rule the world. As he said,

I believe that Islam will be revived again, and we'll become the sole religion that is being believed by people in the world, because it is the promise of God in the Qur'an, and the prophet. They say Islam will be back, and will be reviving at the end of the world, before the hereafter. I think Islam will affect the West. Islam will dominate the West and the world.

One thing that had convinced him of this was the excessive freedom he had encountered in the West. He explained, "It is dangerous. Too much freedom is dangerous, so in that sense it's a challenge to Muslims".

2.4.2 Western decadence inspires greater commitment

Another factor which played an important role in the experience of students who became more Islamic in terms of practice and ideas was that they were motivated towards increased commitment by what they viewed as the decadence of the West. One student (9: Pakistan, male, 27, married, PhD, 3 years) who said that he had increased his religious practices, and who also became more Islamic in terms of ideas and values ("Yeah, I have changed. I am

more strict with my ideas now"), stated that he had become much more convinced of the importance of maintaining Islamic beliefs after encountering Western culture first hand. As he said, "Looking see different cultures that you come across, we thank God that we are safer than this society in many things. I mean my feeling is that we are a much stronger society than this."

One of the problems with Western society that inspired him to commit himself to Islam in a greater way here was the breakdown of the family. He explained,

Like first of all, we have a very strong family system. And here the family system is destroyed completely. For example, I see my wife and my children in a family system there more safer than the one here. Because if I go and have an accident and die, families are very strong, they will cover my children and my wife, my parents.

I actually see one thing, it is not a very positive idea but I think there is something coming that is very nasty in the future, for the West. This generation which is being brought up at the moment. If you see they have given complete freedom to the woman about thirty years ago. They were just celebrating yesterday when married women were given equal rights to keep a job. Women with children, I think they got it 30 years before. When this generation grows up, those who are now looked after in the child care centres, it will be a very nasty place to live.

Another thing he viewed as a problem was the freedom individuals had, which he considered excessive. "One thing which I see here is too much freedom, and people are becoming more irresponsible, attitude wise, and behaviour wise...and when I see Michael Jackson gyrating, I thank God we don't do this, and we won't do this!"

A third area of concern for this student was the materialism and secularism which he felt dominated the Western perspective on life. As a result, he felt an even greater urgency to follow Islamic values.

Here is too much selfishness, too much materialistic society, so these things make me thank God, that if I wasn't strict Islam, it would make me stricter Islam. Because this is first time I am seeing some country - and a full society - who is diverting from religion and seeing the consequences.

And a fourth area of concern that motivated him in his Islamic beliefs was the indifferent attitude towards religion he felt predominated in the West. Australians, he thought were moving away from religion, towards a value-less lifestyle.

Of course they are moving away...they are moving toward no religion actually. You can see in Pakistan they have very strong ideas about what they believe, and what they think. Here, if you ask someone they would say, 'I don't know, I don't care'. That is not atheism, it's valueless. You could say baseless, no idea about life.

I mean if you have the whole system and you don't have any ideology, then this means it is a baseless thing. Anything can have ideology. If education doesn't have any - I can't put it actually right word for it - but if education doesn't have any purpose, any certain aims to achieve, then education is baseless. For example, in Pakistan education means you are making people aware of world secrets, and that makes them think how important it is to have some values, to have some ideas about this life. When someone would see that the whole universe is not baseless, there is some purpose. Many would think, yeah, then I have some purpose, my life has some purpose. So that would make him more committed to world values and life, than anyone here.

2.4.3 Lack of religion in the West inspires greater commitment

Another factor which played an important role in the experiences of students who became more Islamic in terms of both practice and ideas was their perception that the West was a culture without religious beliefs. One student (12: Pakistan, male, 25, Masters, 1 year) said he met many people here who were not committed to any religion, and this motivated him to become more committed to Islam.

Before I came here I was not praying. When I came here I see the people and I thought that it is very bad that they are not religious here. They are not going to churches, they are very much busy in the world things, going shopping and not taking care of God, and these things. Something changed in my mind, and I started praying. I didn't pray for about five or six years in my country. I was not regular. I go all the time now, and I pray five times also in the day.

Another factor that contributed to the increase in his religious commitment was that he believed Western people had too much personal freedom. It encouraged people to become indulgent and irresponsible, he said. "I am thinking that freedom is good but here there is more than enough. Because in our country there are also good things in freedom. But it is not like this, where you become an animal."

He was also encouraged in his commitment to Islam by his studies, which he believed confirmed the truth of the Qur'an.

Actually when we study the principle of relativity in Physics, this is the same thing in our Holy book. Our prophet went to the heavens in just one second, but he lived 37 years in the heavens. When we study this, we see that it is the same principle as in the book. And the planets, it is in our book. So we are convinced that this is a science that we study in our Holy book.

As a result of this view, that what he was learning in the West was Islamic in many ways, he became even more convinced that Islam was the truth, and proposed that the West could be

rescued from its current malaise by becoming more Islamic. When asked what this would entail, he explained,

The courses are okay. They are not contradicting. The science courses would be the same. I don't know about the Art courses. Full clothing, not wearing shorts, when you see a girl with less clothing you want to make play with her. I think they are playing with the girls. This is my view, there is no respect. The parties, there are too much. I would cut that and make it more...not discos. I would want to make it more knowledge. When you go there you will learn something and not just drink and dance. I would want somebody to come and teach you not the religion but the social thing. How to live, and these things.

For this student, then, being in the West represented an opportunity to become more convinced of the truth of his Islamic ideas and values. The West was viewed as a decadent culture that was in need of spiritual renewal, a perspective that emboldened him in his faith, and motivated him to an even greater commitment.

Another student (17: Indonesian, male, 26, Masters, 2 years) who said that he had become more committed here in terms of practice and ideas because he considered the West to be a culture lacking religion, felt that Western people lived only for temporal pleasures and material things.

I feel that I am stronger now, because I can see the difference here. One thing I learned from the West is, most of the Western countries are currently being away from their religion. That is my own observation. They always rely their actions on the world. They base their actions, their credibility, their ability on their life in this world. This is because they are probably becoming less believing in supernatural things. They are becoming less believing in the hereafter. So what they're doing now is what they are expecting to have tomorrow. They never base what they're doing on the hereafter. In a secular society, people never think about that. That never think about the rewards of God for example. What they're doing now they're doing for the immediate result. I mean, what I'm doing now is for the sake of God, because I need the reward of God. For example, I'm working hard in this office not because I'm expecting a good promotion, expecting a good salary from my boss. But I'm doing this because I will be given a reward from God. I'm doing this for my own benefits in the hereafter.

Another factor that led to his increased commitment was that he was asked many questions about his religion and needed to study in order to answer. As he said, "The more I need to find out, the more I study my religion. Now I know more of what my religion asks me to do and not to do. Yeah, it is good for me, so that I can learn more about ideas."

He also became more self-confident, he said, as a result of the intellectual challenges, and his participation in discussions.

I feel my brain really works here, and, at the same time, I'm using my critical ability. And I'm becoming more self-confident. I mean, people are doing this, why can't I do it? I have the same background. I have the same brain. I have the same language, English. I have a confidence that I didn't have when I was in Indonesia.

In addition to his new self-confidence, he also began to think more about Islam, and, as a result, became much more convinced that the Islamic principles he had learned from his parents were rational and therefore valid. As he said,

Many things I have learnt here. As I said to you, I am becoming more rational. I used to follow what my parents asked me to do without reasoning myself. For example, "Don't smoke, because it's not a good thing to do". But I didn't get further explanation. Or, for example, "Don't go to the cinema". Before, I didn't even reason myself, why I should not do this. But after being here, I reason, and still accept it. Now I realise why my parents asked me to do something. I can really understand that now. I can reason myself now, because I can see many social phenomena existing here. There are many things in my religion that probably up until now I can still find it hard to reason or rationalise. Not because those principles are not applicable, are not rational. Just because at this moment I haven't been able to find the explanation. It might come tomorrow or next week. I believe that everything that has been said in the Qur'an will be proved.

Rather than undermine his beliefs, then, the emphasis on reason in his university studies actually strengthened his commitment, because it confirmed his belief that truth - whether found in the West or in the Islamic world - comes from God, spoken through the Qur'an.

I have found many evidence, truth, existing in the West, in Australia. My Holy book, the Qur'an says these things already existed. That really makes me confident. What I found in my religion are also existing in the Western society. For example, you must reason yourself, not just follow the people in front of you, or the people to whom you rely for your understandings. But you must reason yourself, because you're the only one who is responsible in the hereafter. I believe in the hereafter. What you are doing now, you will get the results of your doing, your actions in the hereafter. So you must reason yourself.

This notion has been mentioned in my holy book the Qur'an. But it never exists in my own people. I have never found it. I find this notion here, in the West. So that's one thing which has given me an impact, because the Western people have always proved something through scholarly research. They don't rely their research on particular thing, for example, on the Bible, or Qur'an. But they can still find, or breakthrough, or discover something. And what they have found has actually existed in the Qur'an. That's what makes me frustrated.

Why don't Moslem people trust back their knowledge to the Holy book in the hope to find something as scholarly as the Western people do? And there still must be other things unanswered, unsolved, in the Qur'an. But I believe these will be answered, these will be understandable in the future. It will be proved in the West, by Moslem people.

Because of his new found confidence in the existence of objective truth, and in his ability to find truth using reason, he then became critical of other Muslims who do not practice Islam fully, further illustrating the depth of feeling and commitment to Islam he had developed while in the West.

There are Muslims who can have this kind of education, as long as we go back to our religion, we go back to our Holy Book. All knowledge has existed in our time. Why many Muslim countries are left behind, is because they are practising their religion fully. They are not fully committed. I believe if they are practising their religion fully, it can regain our formal identity as great. Like it used to happen centuries ago. What I am hoping is that I am encouraging many, many Muslim students to come to Western countries to adopt knowledge, and then after finishing their study they must go to their home countries, and build or construct on their religion by adopting a skill devised from the West.

And finally, one other indicator that he had become more Islamic since being in the West was that while he had encountered Western perspectives and ideas during his studies at university, in no way did he view any of them as alternatives or threats to his own Islamic framework of understanding. As he said, "Even if you become a very modern person, religion never becomes your enemy. I am becoming more modern, not Western." Rather, he believed these ideas should be brought into the Islamic world to further strengthen and enhance it, thereby bringing it back to its former glory.

So, I am really hoping that that kind of education, where you have a freedom of speaking, where you have a freedom of thinking...I am hoping this kind of education system will be existing in Muslim world. And that we can construct this kind of education, based on our own understanding, our own belief and we can make this education as scholarly, as modern, as good, as great as in the West. And that we can attract many Muslim students to study in that kind of education system which is unavailable in a Muslim country, so in the future we can be equally standing with the Western culture.

2.4.4 Western experience is a catalyst for maturity and growth

Another factor which played a role in the experiences of students who had changed both in terms of practice and ideas was that being in the West helped them to mature as individuals, and as Muslims. One student (13: Maldives, male, 20, Masters, 2 years) explained,

I am more committed now, I think. When I came I wasn't an adult, and I was trying to find out who I am. It is just that before, I wasn't at peace with myself, but now, I am more mature. Now I have settled down, and know who I am, and what I want to do, so I guess I have changed in that way since I came here. I think I am more committed to religion now than before. I pray more and go to the Mosque. I usually can't go on the Friday because I have a class. But apart from that I try to go. We have five prayers each day, and the one at lunch, I try to go to the Mosque. But the others I do at home.

One way that he had grown in his faith was that now prayer and fasting had a new meaning and significance.

You sort of do it for the social pressures back at home. Like everyone goes to pray, and you go to pray. But here you don't have to pray because everyone else is praying. You pray because you find that it is a good thing. You have to know the reason why you are doing it. You don't fast because everyone else is fasting, because the women don't cook, or something like that. You fast because of the meaning.

Another way that he had grown in maturity as Muslim was that he began to seek answers to questions about Islam that he was previously reluctant to ask. Being in the West made him think more about his religious beliefs, he said, and now, he questioned Islamic ideas "all the time, all the time." Some of the questions he now asked about his faith included,

Why Islam says to not take alcohol, and things like that. I have always asked why, why? Not to eat pork, and not to touch. Yeah, endless things. But people say it is wrong to ask like that, to check logic to religion. But I don't see it that way. That is where I differ from my friends as well. I am more questioning now, like why is it like that in Islam? Stuff like that.

And a third area of growth in his life as a Muslim was that he was now more tolerant of other perspectives. As he said, "And I think I am more tolerant, thinking about others. Before I mostly thought about myself and my family, but now I understand that others might think differently from me."

Overall, then, for this student, the West was a place of spiritual growth and maturity. As he explained, Islam meant more to him now than ever.

It means living life to the fullest, I suppose. Not just going with strict rules, not being really fundamentalist about it and just taking the context as it is. You can apply it to all aspects of life. It just makes your life more appreciable. You appreciate your life, and live your life to the full. There is a spiritual dimension to it, and that enhances life much more.

Another student (19: Indonesian, female, 21, Undergraduate, 2 years) who matured as an individual and as a Muslim during her time in the West, felt challenged by the non-Islamic culture of Australia to affirm her Islamic identity more, and stand up for Islam. One thing she did, she said, was put on the Hijab here, despite the fact she never wore it at home.

I didn't wear it in junior high. I just got it one and a half years ago, after I arrived here. I feel like I have got to keep my identity as a Muslim, a good Muslim. Australian people just don't understand, maybe they just look and think "silly girl wearing that thing", but they don't know what it is. Sometimes I have thought about

that, but then I get back to the basics. No, this is my principle, and I just got to keep it.

Another indicator of her increased commitment to Islamic values was that despite many temptations, she consistently refused to compromise her principles. As she said,

Whenever I go with a family to the park they offer me wine and alcohol. That would never happen in Jakarta or Indonesia. They are mostly Muslim people and they don't drink. I have to really insist, "No, I am not drinking". Lots of temptations here. All your friends want to go to discos, and I have got to just remind myself I don't have to say "Yes" when they want me to go with them.

Her commitment was even more tested by some of her own Muslim friends who were compromising their Islamic values, she said, and who had often asked her to join them.

Yeah. Most of my friends here are Muslims too. But they don't seem to really care, no not care. Whenever they go with me and then they, they just want fun. They don't really understand about it. They pray too, sometimes they pray with me. But then they still go to the disco, to the bars, and things like that. They are not trying to influence me, but they often ask me if I would agree with their ideas. I mean, no...as a Muslim, I don't. So they just think, "all right, yeah", but they have never influenced me to do something bad like that.

Another indicator of an increase in commitment to Islamic principles was her perseverance in maintaining her prayer times and her determination to eat only Halal food.

In my place whenever it's prayer time, you always get a chance to hear the prayer call, and you would go to the Mosque from everywhere. In this place there is only one in Canberra, and it is really hard. I miss that. But then you convince yourself that you can still do these ways. And sometimes I find it difficult when I want to eat Halal food. That is the most hard. They once had a big issue about all the food in MacDonalds. It's not Halal. There's something from pigs, some certain kinds of oil.

Perhaps the most significant indicator of her increased commitment, however, was her desire to study her religion more as a result of an encounter she had with a person who challenged her in public about her beliefs.

I got this experience when I just walk around Civic and then suddenly a man just approach me and said, "Do you mind if I ask you a few questions about your religion?" "Yeah sure, what is it?" And then he started to ask, "Why do you have to cover your face? You are pretty. Is it really important to cover your head like that?" Then I was stunned! What is this guy doing? Okay, I don't really want to argue about this. Then he said, "Is it better to just look good in front of your God, instead of covering your head?" Basically I just answered him. "If you say that people have to look good in front of God, how can that really look beautiful if you kill someone, or drink alcohol, or make the world ruin, and then you make disasters in your family", and things like that. People are staring at us, so I just finished it.

Rather than shrink away from this challenge, she viewed it as an opportunity to grow in her faith, and become more knowledgeable.

I kind of feel challenged because I really have to explain it to them. Not in detail but in general. They sometimes try to attack me because they think maybe she doesn't know much about her religion, but I feel like I still have to study a lot. If anyone asks you lots of questions about your religion, you have to be able to answer. I realise that it is good, because it reminds you to learn a lot, read again and again, just to be able to answer them.

For this student, then, the intellectual focus of university life, and non-Islamic culture of the West in no way presented a threat or danger to her own Islamic beliefs and practices.

Rather, the difficulties encountered only served to further strengthen her resolve to remain - and indeed grow - in her Islamic faith. This would indicate she did not become secular in any way during her time in the West.

2.4.5 Challenged by discussions about other religious traditions

Another factor which played a role in the experiences of students who became more Islamic in terms of both religious practices and ideas was that they felt challenged by discussions with other students about religions and philosophies. One student (20: Iran, male, 29, married, PhD, 4 yrs) said that encountering other religious traditions and ideas only served to increase his appreciation of Islam.

I believe I have become stronger, because you know, not many people bother to go and study other religions, or other ideas. So yeah, it has made me more stronger, because I have been in contact with different religious faiths and philosophies, these sorts of things. You know, I really find that what we've got in Islam is much more rich, and valuable, so really I think I have become really strong in my faith, and I'm proud of being a Muslim, because as I've said, I've seen many people from other religions, and discussed with them about their religions, this sort of thing. So I mean, now I think I am more knowledgeable about other religions, and also my religion as well.

One experience that convinced him even further of the truth of Islam was a conversation he had with some Jehovah's Witnesses.

Yeah, as I said many people – Jehovah Witnesses or whatever they're called - when they come to your home, knock on the door, or they catch up with me, and they try to talk to you. I mean, I have had some opportunity. I mean, even if you don't want to, you have to talk with them for a couple of minutes. It gives me some ideas, and as I say, I like to discuss with them, because as I said, we really believe that Islam is the last religion which is the completion of the prophets. So we do not deny those other prophets. We really highly respect them, and accept their beliefs. The only thing that we say is, we believe that Mohammed was a continuation of that – the last prophet.

Although he encountered various ideas and philosophies here that challenged his own religious traditions, he nonetheless remained committed to Islam. However, these numerous encounters with other faiths did bring about some change in his thinking. He became more tolerant, he said of ideas that were different than his own, an important intellectual change for someone with what he called a "radical" religious background.

Maybe at the beginning, I come and have a more radical way of thinking. But here, because I see different sorts of people, and have been exposed to different things, it's – I think it makes me more tolerable of different ideas. So that is something which is really good. I mean it makes me to think before I decide about seeing some people, or judging of people perhaps. You know, when you are in your country, most people are treated the same as you, because you are from the same culture, from the same religion. And if you see something which is different - I mean in the first place you overreact. But here, because you see different people, that is something that has helped me.

And a final indicator that he grew in commitment to Islam while in the West was the desire he developed here to go back to what he called the "golden age" of Islam, to see the Islamic world strong once again. When asked whether he believed the contemporary Islamic world was in a state of revitalisation, he replied,

I think that is something that is everywhere – I mean it is something that is continually going – always there will be some, as you call it, a reform or revolution. You know, in medieval Asia, when the Muslims were very prosperous in science and technology - because people really were following Islam, because Islam – the prophet Mohammed said that you have to learn from the day you are born to the day you go to the grave. So learning is something that is highly appreciated and recommended in Islam. So I think - after that golden age I call it - for Muslims, for different reasons, we forgot our values, and actually we deteriorated to some situation you can see now. In most of the Muslim countries you see, they are fighting together, these sorts of things. But now, it seems that people are really thinking – looking back, and thinking about those golden days, and following perhaps more Islamic rules and commands. We are hoping to go back to those days.

2.4.6 Shocked by the state of Islam in Australia

Another factor which played a role in the experiences of students who became more Islamic in terms of both practice and ideas was their encounter with Muslims living in Australia who they felt were no longer living up to Islamic standards. One student (21: India, male, 41, married, PhD, 2 yrs) who felt shocked by the reputation Muslims had in Australia, said that he now gave more time to his religion. He was much more determined now, he said, to keep his Islamic traditions here. He explained,

Here, you know, because of the differences, we try to maintain our integrity. You need a little bit more effort for yourself and whole family. Like my children, they were brought up in Saudi Arabia. You know, they never studied in mixed schools.

So now, when they came here, things are different, environment is different. So I have to put some extra effort on them to make them understand that we have to maintain our integrity. Even if I live in Saudi Arabia, and if I don't associate myself with some kind of religious effort, then I will just be carried away by, you know, my desires.

One of the indicators that this student was serious about maintaining his Islamic practices and values was that he moved to be near a mosque. He had no problems in the West as a Muslim, he said, because, "we are living in Auburn. I'm close to the mosque so there are no problems. It's very Islamic there."

Another indicator of an increase in commitment was that he was now more concerned for the Islamic world as a whole. Being in the West, it seemed, had given him an increased sense of urgency for Muslims everywhere to come back to Islamic principles, and to follow Islam with sincerity. One experience he had here that convinced him Muslims were not living up to the standards of the Qur'an was when he was told not to buy things from Muslim shops because they weren't honest! He explained,

When I came here, people - the Muslims! - here told me to buy from the Australian, because the Australian will not lie, and he will tell you the truth. Don't go to Muslims to buy things! We have to cultivate character in Muslim people which comes through the strong faith and the worship, the living style, the whole thing.

As a result of experiences like these, this student became even more burdened for the Islamic world, and became convinced that it was not the West that now posed the most serious threat to the Islamic world; rather it was now Muslims themselves. The West was not to blame for the state of the Islamic world, he said, "I don't think so. I don't think so, because they are not doing anything. They don't have to do anything." But rather, Muslims themselves were bringing the Judgement of God on Islamic societies. He explained,

We are doing this ourselves, we are moving away from Islam. In one of the other Suras a prophet says that if a majority of Muslims are involved in sins, then a lot of anger will come on them, on Muslims. They will be punished in this world. The majority of Muslims are not following the commandments.

For this student, then, living in the West was a wake up call. He was shocked by the behaviour of other Muslims here, and as a result, became convinced that Muslims themselves needed to come back to the Qur'an and to practice their religion with sincerity once again.

It's a kind of overall situation, and what I feel is that whatever problems are coming on Muslims are their own earnings, and this is earned by your own hands. So

because of our own bad deeds, which is our wishes, we shall be in a bad situation. I mean it is really absolutely wrong idea to blame the West.

2.4.7 Absence of religious coercion here inspires recommitment

Another factor that played a role in the experiences of students who became more Islamic in terms of both practice and ideas was that there was no social or political pressure to perform religious obligations in the West, whereas back in their own country, they felt forced to observe religious duties because of political correctness. One student (28: Iran, male, 31, PhD, 3 years) said that he enjoyed praying now, and thought much more about Islam now than before.

I mean, I'm from a religious family, and I've got more ideas about Islam since I came here, you know. I think one of the most impact I have was that I realised some more of the things of Islam, and, for example, I feel much better when I pray here than when I was in Iran. I don't know why. And I'm stronger, at least in a practical way. I mean, I am a sort of practical religious person.

One factor that had motivated him to a greater commitment in the West was that he was free here from the religious and political coercion he felt in Iran. Now, he enjoyed praying. As he said, "I can relax when I'm praying now. In Iran I didn't have this feeling. You felt that you had to do something. But now I enjoy when I pray. It's not forced." And a second factor that motivated him to become more Islamic in terms of his thinking and practice was that he had encountered difficulties here that made him more aware than ever of his need for God. Being in the West had given him a reason, he said, to make God a priority in his life.

I am more confident as a Muslim, as a person, as an academic, because, I mean, sometimes you've got difficulties, you have to solve a problem. You've got financial problems, you've missed your family, you have to entertain yourself, your family, and it will help you to be confident. I mean, in Iranian culture you are with your family, your friends, your traditions. You will find that people are more helpful to you. You're close with your friends, your family and they will help you somehow. But here, you've - I mean as I've told you, with the isolation - I mean even single person sometimes, I've met them and they've got difficulties because they can't communicate with some of the Australian, and they have depressions. And now, one of the reason I've become more practical in the Islamic faith is that I felt that I have to take care of myself, and there is one person who can help you, and that's God. You have to be confident, and I mean, I became more confident than I was in Iran, and that was one of the best things of living in Australia.

2.4.8 Perception of a lack of religious belief in West

Another factor that played a role in the experiences of students who became more Islamic in terms of both practice and ideas in the West was that they viewed the West as a culture lacking religion, and thus without some important life values. One student (34: Bangladesh,

male, 42, PhD, 7 years) who became more Islamic ("I personally believe that I'm more inclined to religion here than I used to be. I'm more Islamic now than when I came. Yes, I think so"), said that he was motivated by what he perceived as a lack of spirituality in the West. When asked if he viewed the West as a secular culture he replied,

Yes, I think that West is trying to become more secular. Yes. Because my friends, or other peoples, when I ask, "Do you go to the church, or pray?" Then most of them, most of my friends answer like this, "My mum went to the church, but we are not, because we don't believe". So from them I have the idea that they were religious at one time, but now they are becoming secular. This is happening, I think, because of the free decision-making thing. They can make their own decision. We have gone Muslim, and we are taught as Muslims from the very beginning, so we can't change our lives.

In addition, the "mechanical" lifestyle of the West, he said, convinced him that his Islamic religious values were important. He explained,

I feel the importance of religion in my life when I am here. Being in a very industrial and mechanical sort of lifestyle, I feel that it's not great for life itself. That could be important for development of the environment, all mechanical sort of things. But we feel that just scientific and mechanical development will not really lead the world to be a better place. We need to think about the humans, our lives, also.

He also became more aware of his Islamic heritage here, something he took for granted back home.

But I must not forget my future life, which I feel is the life hereafter. After coming here I found that if I don't maintain my life, my values, - Islamic values - maybe the same sort of thing happen to me like what happen here. So I find Islam more preferred here than when I was in Bangladesh. At home I was not so strict to maintain everything, but now I am trying hard. I'm very much positive about Islam.

Another reason he gave for his increased commitment was that in Australia he became aware of the cultural and religious differences between Asia and the West. The West spurned religion, he said, which made him feel that his heritage was far more rich. He explained,

The main thing missing is the religion, yeah, religious element. And I think that could be the basis of other differences. But certainly in terms of values for life, or relationship among individuals, or the community, or the society, and also feelings for the life itself, it is much more important what we have than the West have, I feel.

Our country and basically most part of Asia has got a different sort of consideration of life values. Inter-relationships among friends, families, neighbours, and also enjoying life in a different way, apart from religious aspect. And I believe that in our areas religion - whatever may be the religion - is strongly considered in many cases. But in West, there is an idea that religion has got little value to control life. The

people who are born here, or who are living here, I feel that religious values are very shallow.

A fifth indicator of increased commitment in the West was his perception that Muslim students here could/and were losing their heritage, and his desire to remedy that situation.

I mean we definitely see, we definitely see there are a lot...like the people who came from Afghanistan, or on holidays here in Australia. And they actually have their own values - very strong - and they may even build mosques around different places where they have been. But their children completely have forgotten what Islam is or Muslim is. They have completely forgotten. And nowadays, the Muslim peoples are not increasing in numbers. We see some mosques are now sort of museum in many places. It's not only the Afghanis, but also Lebanese people, Turkish people. We see a big change in the young generation. The problem we see is when the people coming from a different ethnic background or religious background trying to grab Australian values and system totally. They can never take it. In other words, Australian community will not take them totally. There is a gap there. And so they are lost in a way. They have forgotten their own values, and they cannot really fully merge themselves in the Australian sort of culture and values.

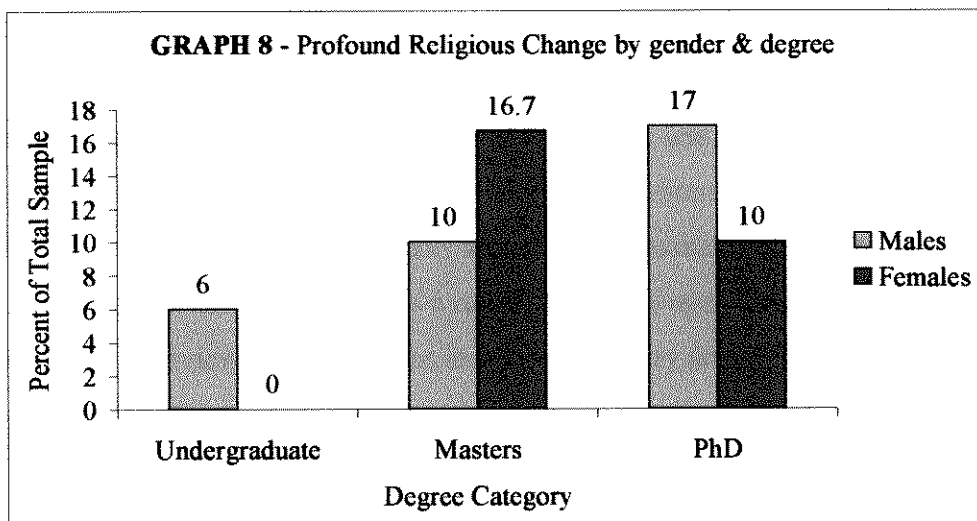
So our consideration is that the condition becomes bad. And they lose even their moral values. It's not unlikely because they cannot fit in the mainstream of society, and they haven't got their own cultural institution. So in a way they are lost, and not unlikely they can become targeted toward becoming some sort of criminal. I mean that's really a big risk for us.

And a final indicator that he had become more convinced of the truth and validity of Islam as a worldview was his desire to see the West "rescued" from its current secular malaise by Islamic principles. The West would become a better place, he said, simply if Islamic values were added. He explained, "But surely we still feel that if we could mix our culture, our values of life with this development it would be something better. Yes, it would be perfect."

PROFOUND RELIGIOUS CHANGE

In Sample (A), five students (12.5%), and in Sample (B), a further four students (10%), for a combined total of nine students (11.3%), indicated they had experienced profound change to their religious practices and/or ideas since coming to the West to study. There were more males (11.9% of total males) than females (4.8% of total females) in this category.

Among the males, the PhD degree students had the greatest percentage in this category (17.4% of male PhD's) while among the females, the Masters degree students had the greatest percentage in this category (16.7% of female Masters students). The following graph illustrates the Profound Change category according to gender and degree.



All five students in this category in Sample (A) have been selected because each account illustrates either a different theme or a different perspective. There were two distinct sub-groupings within this category:

- 3.1 Students who **practised more**, but who appeared to become **less Islamic** in terms of their ideas.
- 3.2 Students who **practised less**, and who also became **less Islamic** in terms of their ideas.

3.1 More Practice – Less Islamic

In Sample (A), three students (7.5%), and in Sample (B) zero students (0%) indicated that they practised their religion more since coming to the West, but who appeared to become less Islamic in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought. There were more females (4.8% of total females) than males (3.4% of total males) in this category. Among the males, the Undergraduate students had the greatest percentage in this category (5% of male Undergraduates), while among the females, the PhD degree students had the greatest percentage (10% of female PhD's).

There were several factors that appeared to play an important role in the experiences of the students in Sample (A).

3.1.1 Adopted a Western perspective on religion

One factor that played an important role in the experiences of students who said they practised their religion more, but who appeared to become less Islamic in areas of their thinking was that they adopted - albeit unknowingly - a Western perspective on religious belief; they came to view religion as simply a matter of personal preference, not an issue of cosmic significance or ultimate truth. As a result, they no longer viewed Islam as a comprehensive worldview with principles and laws for every area of life. One student (22: Indonesian, female, 40, married, PhD, 2 yrs) was quite firm in stating, for example, that she tried to practice her religion faithfully in Australia, and still viewed herself as a committed Muslim.

I still consider I am quite strong Muslim, even though I am not wearing a veil. I pray and I try to have Halal food, and I try to do whatever - I mean the practice. I try to practice here, and try to learn a little bit. We have a group to study Qur'an here, and we get together once a month.

She was also prepared to defend Islamic practices when challenged by others. Many times, she said, she felt challenged to give reasons for her beliefs.

Yeah, like I don't eat pork. Here people always say to me, "It's stupid not to eat pork, because pork is really delicious." But I have said, "No, I don't want to eat pork". They say, "Have you tried?" And I say, "No, never." Then they are even stronger, "You have to try first before you decide whether you want to eat or not". And I tell them, "No, I don't want to." I mean, it happens all the time.

Because of the many questions she faced, however, she began to have doubts about the reasons for some Islamic practices. She said,

And people criticise about my Islam practice, yeah. I just try to tell them that I try to practice my religion, and I believe that there is always a reason why we are not allowed to eat pork, and we have to do this, and do this. And I mean yeah, of course I am trying also to find the answer. You know, the older I am, the more I am concerned about it. I mean, why I am doing this or this.

The questions she was being asked seemed to unsettle her, even to the point where she began to question her own cultural and family authority. She explained, "When I was a kid I just followed whatever my father said, but now I am trying to find why I have to do this."

One indicator of a profound shift in her Islamic worldview, away from a comprehensive perspective, was her statement that Australia would not necessarily improve if Islamic principles were adopted by the nation. She said, "I think it doesn't matter if it is Islamic or not. You know, it doesn't mean that being Islam then you can serve people better."

Another indicator of a profound shift away from a comprehensive Islamic worldview was her belief that education was religiously and philosophically neutral, and therefore need not be Islamic to be good. She explained, "In a university the main objectives should be to provide the best quality education, so it doesn't matter whether the lecturer is Islam, Moslem or not, or if a student is Moslem or not." This comment illustrates a profound shift away from a comprehensive perspective - where Islam is presupposed to be the origin and summation of all truth (objective and subjective) - to the perspective that truth can be known without reference to Islamic revelation.

She made another shift away from the idea that Islam is a comprehensive worldview when she added that Islam should focus mainly on teaching good morals, and that other religions too could teach much the same thing. She explained, "Maybe Islam is more like, like Islam actually teaches you that you have to be honest, you have no corruption, something like that. I think the other religions teach almost the same thing. You have to be fair. I think that's the basic thing."

A final indicator of a profound shift in ideas away from Islam as a blueprint for all of life, was her answer to my question, "Is Islam the only answer?" Revealing her new perspective that Islam is just one moral code among many, she replied,

No, no, I don't think so. For me it does matter to be a Muslim, because I'm a Muslim. I try to be a good Muslim. But it doesn't mean that I think other people will be more happier if they are Muslim, no, no. They can be happy with whatever they are. As long as they are trying to be good, trying to be a responsible citizen, that's the most important for me.

Another student (26: Iran, male, 31, PhD, 4 yrs) who adopted a Western perspective on religion, moving away from the belief in Islam as a comprehensive worldview with principles for every area of life, said that for him, religion was now just a personal matter and nothing more.

I believe that religion must be personal. And here I found it more, in fact, that it really has to be personal, and nothing more than that. I became more affirmative about it, that it's just personal, nothing else. And if you want to practice it, go to the Mosque, do it by yourself. But don't control others, and put pressure on them.

One factor that contributed to this student's change was that he had been exposed to different worldviews here in the West, he said, and, as a result, he questioned Islam now more than ever. As he explained, being in the West, "gives you this critical thinking about -

and questioning of things - because you become familiar with a new worldview, and you see things differently. You see that different things also exist and they are not like yours."

One way that he applied these "critical thinking" skills he learned in the West was in questioning the notion that religion is the basis for moral values.

I had always learned that it's the religion which is the source of morality and ethics, and when I came here, I realised that no, it's not really the religion, it's the human himself or herself that really determines what is ethical, what is not. There are many things that we talk about, and consider them as ethical, which are just a matter that some people have determined. Just maybe people in a high class, or the ruling class has done that for themselves, and then imposed it on other people, and said, "Okay, this is moral". And that's just been for their own benefit. So I found alternatives, and different types of answers to my questions. Definitely the most important part was the answers that I found to my questions that I had in Iran. Now I can see it differently. So there were more horizons opened in front of me.

Another way he applied his new analytical ability was in questioning the way that Islamic principles should be applied in the modern world. Moving away from his previous view that Islamic ideas were valid for all time, he now believed that it was important to bring the time honoured ideas of Islam up to date. Emphasising the importance of reason, now, he argued that,

things should be in fact put into their context, their original context, to be understood - even religion. Then I think you have to update yourself with what's going on in the world. You have to learn. You can't really isolate yourself in your cage and say, "Okay, this is me, and I'm not going to communicate with the rest of the world, because I want to be a good Muslim".

Another indicator of a shift to a more Western, rational approach to religious phenomena, was his new belief that religious ideas should be open to interpretation, and that their truth value depends on time, place and individual preference. He said, "There are millions of Muslims around the world who have different ideas, different understanding. What is a good Muslim, really?"

A third indicator of a shift towards a more rational approach to religion was his questioning of what it means to be a true Muslim. Motivated by his experiences here where he often observed very pious local Muslim women wearing the Hijab, despite the fact they were not forced to do so (as women were in his own country), he began to reconsider his own commitment. As he explained,

I see many different Muslim women around here in Canberra, practising - very devoted Muslims and they don't wear a Hijab. And I just wonder whether that woman, in Iran for example, who was my girlfriend, was wearing that Hijab very

strictly because she had to do it in public, not at home, and didn't practice any kind of Islamic teaching or anything...is she a Muslim? Or is this woman who doesn't wear this, who is living in a free, atheist society, and is practising all other things. Which one is really a Muslim? If I can be a good Muslim, a practising Muslim in a Western country, then I'm more valuable than just being a Muslim when everyone around me is a Muslim, and I'm kind of forced, or I don't have any other options. At least when I have options, and I do that, then I'm more devout and I'm considered a better Muslim. So I think many people have this view, at least my circle of friends and relatives.

And a final indicator of a shift away from Islam as a comprehensive worldview towards a more Western rational approach to religion, was his new belief that life could be lived and enjoyed without religion, that all religions were equal anyway, and that what was important was to identify the common denominator in all of us, our humanity. As he concluded,

You don't have to believe in God, or believe in a specific text to really be able to live your life. I can believe in whatever I like, and I can practice what I want without feeling ashamed or embarrassed here. There are many other people who are living their lives who are not corrupt. They are very nice people. They are understanding. They are human beings like us, if not better, and they don't believe in what we do - or maybe not practice. And there are many other things that are common. It doesn't matter if we have any religion or not, if we are Muslim, or Christian, or religious, or atheist or anything. There are many things in common. Its not just the way we look, our body shape, it's not just that. There are many things just in our mind that are very common, and very similar, and we can communicate it to people.

For this student, then, being in the West afforded a unique opportunity to re-examine his religious ideas and reconsider his own commitment to Islam. Being challenged by the freedom individuals had in the West to decide for themselves whether they wanted to follow a religion or not, he became more convinced than ever that religion was simply a matter of personal choice, and that it had little to do with national development. Emphasising reason over revelation, he adopted a Western approach to religious phenomena, now preferring to critically evaluate religious ideas using reason, rather than just simply accepting them as being true. It would seem clear, from this evidence, and from the fact that he had reduced Islam from an all-encompassing worldview to a matter of personal preference, that this student had indeed become intellectually "secularised" during his time in the West.

3.1.2 Adopted some ideas from other religious traditions

Another factor that played an important role in the experiences of students who said that they practised their religion more in Australia, but who appeared to become less Islamic in terms of their ideas, was that they met individuals from other religious traditions, and, in the

process of developing a friendship and empathy for them, adopted some of the ideas from those other religious perspectives. One student (11: Pakistan, male, 22, Undergraduate, 2 years) began the interview by explaining that he participated in religious activities here much more than he ever would have back home.

I would never have bothered to think about the religion when I was in Pakistan, but here I have definitely thought more, and done a lot more for the religion as well. For example, I pray more in Australia than I have done in my whole life. I have never been to a Mosque regularly even in Pakistan. I have been to the Mosque regularly on a Friday up here, more frequently than in Pakistan. I also got involved in the Muslim association last year. I am the treasurer. We have done a lot, had a few lectures, trying to tell people what Islam is, not what they are told. In the last two years we have had two major lectures in which one of them had over 800 people attending it.

One reason he gave for the increase in religious practices here was that he had more time to think about their meaning. As he explained, "You think more deeply about why things are done, and why everything is there." He also explained - with some pride - that there was a pattern among members of his extended family, that those who went overseas to study all became more Islamic while away.

When you come from Pakistan there is one thing you do more, you follow the religion a bit more strongly than you did before. That has happened with me, and with my cousins, all of us in our times when we came. When my cousins went over to America, they tried to be working for the religion a bit more.

Another reason he gave for this increase in religious practices was that, like his cousins, he was faced with many questions about his religion while in the West. "People ask", he said, "Why do you do this, why do you do that? And we have to answer those questions. That is when we stand up, and we have a think, and we have to do it collectively because you can't do it individually at times. Our generation does become a stronger Muslim when they go home."

And a third reason he became more committed here was that being in a non-Islamic cultural environment had forced him to think about the religion more, and to discover its meaning in a new way. He explained,

I have thought about my religion definitely more. Basic principles, why are they there. Especially when you get into discussions with other religious groups. You get an occasional one off where you discuss those sort of things. That is when you have to think, you have to have answers, you can't answer if you don't know. Sometimes you get a question you have to work on it and think about it. I would definitely know more now.

We think about the religion ourselves, we analyse it, because initially we just believed in it because we were born in a Muslim country and were taught the whole thing. We come into the West and learn to analyse it, think about it.

An important shift did occur, however, as he began to champion the cause of reason over religion as a framework for understanding and analysing the world we live in. As he said, university study had really opened his eyes, and taught him to think analytically.

Basically, when you come to a university it just opens your mind even further than it was. It makes you think a lot more deeply than you would have every bothered to before. You definitely get more analytical at university. You learn something that will facilitate your study of your own religion because you will think analytically, criticise it analytically and come up with an idea. This has been a good development.

One of the consequences of the shift towards a more Western Enlightenment worldview, where reason replaced religion as the lens through which life is viewed and understood,² was that he began to question the validity of some Islamic practices. Many of his friends back home would be "shocked", he said, by his questioning of the need to pray five times each day. "Our asking why we have to pray five times a day would be shocking to them. They would say that it is meant to be - that you pray five times a day. But they wouldn't tell you why. You just do it because everyone else is doing it."

Another result of this new appreciation for reason was that he changed his ideas about the role of religion in nation building. He now viewed secularism as a good thing, because it promoted thinking, he said. And he began to esteem the West more highly than the Islamic world because it was more "rational", (ie.) because people do not follow a religion. "That is one thing that has developed up here with time" He said. "Probably it has arisen here because people do not follow a religion here. They are more secular in their thinking. Secularism is a good thing, because it promotes broader thinking."

Another important shift occurred in the way he now viewed other religious traditions. He had become much more tolerant, he said, especially toward the Jews.

I have become more tolerant - definitely. Like this year we have been working with the Jewish association on campus a lot. A lot more than anyone would expect a Muslim to get along with Jews. There is nothing wrong with it. It is difficult to put it to any average Muslim. It never happens in Israel, this is just a one-off place.

He also now tried to understand the conflict in Israel from the Jewish perspective, illustrating an increasing empathy for them.

I don't know what is going on, and why it is happening, personally. I can't say Israel is bad because of the killing. There must be a reason for them as well. There was a reason for Israel existing. You have got to accept that they needed somewhere to live as well.

One of the greatest shifts, however, was in his acceptance of other religions as being of equal truth value with Islam. In his own words he had become a "more liberal" Muslim, valuing people now not on the basis of whether they were Muslim or not, but on the basis of their humanity.

I am much more able to accept other views. Yes. I have learned to interact with them, and I have learned about their religions as well. It is good. It gives you a comparison with your own religion. It is basically the same religion. We all believe in the same God, there is one God that is the common factor. It is just how you pray to Him that is the difference probably. You just have to be tolerant.

You don't become a very fundamentalist Muslim, but you become a more liberal Muslim, a Muslim that accepts others views as well, which is basically the spirit of Islam. You have to accept others as well, you have to co-exist. That is how the prophet did it. So when you go home, you are a better person. You might not be a better Muslim but you are a better person.

3.2 Less Practice – Less Islamic

In Sample (A), two students (5%), and in Sample (B), four students (10%), for a combined total of six (7.5%), said that they practised their religion less in Australia, and also appeared to become less Islamic in terms of ideas and/or patterns of thought. There were more males (8.5% of total males) than females (4.8% of total females) in this category. Among the males, the PhD degree students had the greatest percentage in this category (13% of male PhD's), while among the females, the Masters degree students had the greatest percentage in this category (16.7% of female Masters students). There were several factors which contributed to the experiences of students in Sample (A).

3.2.1 Reason more important now than religion

One factor that played an important role in the experience of one student (23: Iran, male, married, 30, PhD, 3 years) who said he practised his religion less, and who also appeared to become less Islamic in terms of ideas was that, like the previous student, he viewed reason as being more important and authoritative now than religious revelation in making sense of the world around him. As he became increasingly rationalistic, he also became more

outspoken and critical of his own religious traditions, shifting away from the Qur'an as a reference point for judging the morality of individual actions. As he said, he now evaluated actions on the basis of reason, not religious principles.³

Yes, I think that I have changed. Before I came to Australia, I usually tried to judge about this kind of issues based on the religious principles. For example, Islam permitted us to commit, to do euthanasia on us. But now I try to understand them, based on social, cultural and personal things. So when I hear, for example, somebody did euthanasia, I don't want to think about the religious rules - does the religious permit this or not. I try to understand this based on the social, cultural and personal decision. I think it as attributed to more personal matter than to religious or social, cultural thing. So I can say that it had some effect on my moral aspect. Maybe that's the effect of rationalisation.

And in terms of sexual behaviour, he had become much more open now to the Western idea that individuals should be free to make their own choices about their sexual lifestyles.

Before coming to the West, he judged people on the basis of the laws of the Qur'an, he said,

That's, I think, the positive aspect, because I learn that I should be open, I should learn our Qur'an, our religious book and try to understand it according to my level of knowledge. So for example, I don't object to any aspect of Australian culture here, when I see new aspects, for example, say lesbians and gays. Earlier on, if I saw this, I would say "It's very bad, it's not acceptable at all." But now, when in Australia, I try to understand this person, why people become lesbians and gays. Is this a personal choice? And what's the big deal about that? So I think the change was the way I see and understand the things.

Another shift that occurred was that he became more tolerant and willing to evaluate other cultures objectively, on their own merits, rather than judge them from an Islamic perspective.

So I think I've changed, for example, in my tolerance. Now I can live with everybody. It doesn't matter for me who is sitting next to me, it doesn't matter. I can get along with a black person very easily. But when I was in my country, I said "You are very difficult, you are very dangerous," for example. So I think that my tolerance has gone up and I can understand different aspects of different cultures.

For his wife, however, the change was more dramatic. She became so impressed by Western freedoms - especially personal freedom, and the lack of social and political pressure to conform to certain religious ideas and behaviour - that she abandoned not only many of her Islamic practices, but indeed the centrality of Islam as a reference point for life as well. He explained, "But change for my wife was different. She changed a lot, and so now I can say that she doesn't accept some aspects of our culture at all."

One of the Islamic practices abandoned by his wife was the wearing of the *Hijab*. In Iran, she had always worn one, albeit for political reasons. As he said, "For example, she doesn't like the *Hijab* now. Not at all. She prefers to not have the *Hijab*. She says 'Well, what's the point of having the *Hijab*?'"

Another change was that she rejected aspects of her Islamic identity, preferring to socialise with Australians instead. He explained,

She doesn't want to socialise with our Iranian friends, she wants to socialise with her Australian friends. The change was dramatic for her. For example, if we receive two calls, one from our Muslim friend in here, saying that "We are going out. Come with us," and one call from an Australian friend saying "That we are going out," she says "I am going with my Australian friend and you should come with me." So she doesn't want to socialise with them, and she has some reasons. She says that if you go out with Muslims, we will have lots of restrictions that we should follow.

For example, about our talk - we should be careful about our talk. We can't say everything that we want to say, we can't speak freely, we can't act freely. So what's the point of going out with those students? So she says "Forget them, and don't go with them."

As a result of the profound change his wife was experiencing, he struggled to retain an Islamic perspective and cultural traditions. During the interview he was quick to assure me that he had not changed. As he said,

But for me, change was not very high. I try to comprehend the Australian culture. I appreciate their culture now, but I don't reject my culture. I try to compromise these two cultures with each other. But she has really started to reject our culture totally, and accept Australian culture completely, and I'm a little bit worried about that.

Despite his attempt to retain his Islamic perspective, however, profound changes were occurring in his own religious worldview. For one thing, he began to value intellectual and personal freedom more highly than before. As he explained, "The most that I like here is that you can speak freely, you don't have to be afraid of anything."

In addition, the shift in his perspective towards a more "rational" approach to religion now led him to argue for the legitimacy of multiple perspectives on religious practices and ideas. It was as if he was now looking at religion through the lens of reason, rather than reason through the lens of religion. As a result, he began to question his previous perspective on the authority of the Qur'an, for example.

There is no problem with Islam at all. The problem is all the scholars' understanding of the religion. Islam is stable, it doesn't change, but people's understanding of Islam, of religion, changes, and this change begins all the time. For example, people have a different kind of understanding of Islam two hundred years ago, but now

because of the scientific development and political development, we can have a different understanding of Islam.

He also began to question Islamic religious authorities, viewing their ideas and perspectives as "old" and outdated, indicating a further shift towards a Western evolutionary perspective on religion - that religious ideas are not absolutely "true" for all time, but must be periodically updated to bring them into line with what is "reasonable" in contemporary society. He explained,

Unfortunately in countries like my country, scholars - religious scholars - only try to stick to their old version, old version of understanding. They don't want to try to understand this Qur'an now. They don't want to read them now and try to understand it according to this new ages, new years. They say that "We understood it a long time ago" and they just want to follow this understanding. But we have to now open our books, our religious books, read them now and try to understand them now. We should forget about our understanding five hundred years ago. Unfortunately, this old understanding is still dominant in my country, so that's the problem.

Perhaps the most profound change, however, occurred in his perspective towards the role of religion in contemporary society, and particularly about whether secularisation was a good thing. As he explained, he now viewed the secularisation of society as a positive development.

Let me put it this way, that before I came to here, to Australia, I was totally opposed to this secularisation process, totally. In my country they taught us that secularisation means the detaching of religion from the social and political life. Yes, they avoid a strong secularisation. Now, I might have a different idea about this secularisation. I think secularisation is not that bad.

One explanation he offered for this change of perspective was that in his country, he was forced to perform religious duties because of social and political "correctness", and he resented that.⁴ He explained,

In our country, you have to pretend that you are practising religious activities. If we had a secular society, I wouldn't have to pretend that. The reason that I have to pretend, in spite of my inside decision, is that we don't have a secular society. If I want to keep my job, I have to pretend that I'm practising the Islamic activities.

But perhaps the most influential factor in the change this student experienced to his religious ideas (from this researcher's perspective), was that reason had become more important and central in his worldview than revelation. As he continued to embrace a Western, rational approach to religious ideas - albeit unintentionally - he had intellectually adopted a Western mindset, viewing the secularisation of society as a positive step in social

development, and human reason as his new authority and reference point. As he concluded, "But now I start to understand there are some positive aspects in secularisation. Not everything is explainable under religion."

3.2.2 Encountering the developed West fosters disillusionment with Islam

Another factor that played an important role in the experience of one student who said that he practised less and who also became less Islamic in thinking (2: Pakistan, male, 38, married, Masters, 3 years) was that he had become progressively disillusioned with Islam as a result of experiencing the freedom and modernity of the West. As this final student said, he now viewed Islam as a cultural identity, but no longer as a foundation for social development.

Islam is an identity. Yeah, it's always been, it's been an identity like this, you know, for Muslim people. But is it enough, Islam as an identity? Is it enough to keep people together? I mean, that's the question. My answer is "No, it's not enough." Today it's very difficult for a religion to keep a people together. It can give them a sense of identity, and they can die for it, but they can't live for it. And these Muslim states are not organised on the basis of religion, and they cannot be organised on the basis of religion. There are many other factors involved, and that's why in Pakistan Muslims kill Muslims. It not that non-Muslims are killing Muslims - no it's not that - they are killing each other, and they're killing each other for their economic interests. That's their religion.

A further indicator of a shift away from Islam as a comprehensive worldview was his statement that Islam was incapable of contributing to the construction of a modern, progressive nation.

You see it in Muslim societies, it's not working, it hasn't worked, this Islamic system. Islam as a religion certainly is one of the great religions, no doubt about that. But Islam as a political system has never really presented a practical working model, and if somebody thinks that it can one day - like Akbar Ahmed thinks that Muslims are not really Muslims, not good Muslims, that's why there is no Islam and no Islamic system. So how will you make them good Muslims?

And a third indicator that he had moved away from a comprehensive Islamic perspective on social development was his assertion that the idea of an Islamic state was simply a utopian ideal in today's world.

So this whole idea of a religious state is not a plausible one in modern society. No, I don't see any hope for that, and I don't see any religious society, a truly religious state, a truly religious Islamic state, in today's world. It has been an ideal all along. It's a utopia. It has never been a reality. Nobody can show me any Islamic state in fourteen hundred years of Islam. The only Islamic state was the state of the prophet Mohammed, which he established. And at that time, you know, the people were certainly very enthusiastic. So we see in that first - and only - state of Islam, that

there was vitality, there was creativity. But it was a new religion, it was a new ideology, it was a new system, so it had some vitality. But after sixty years, after the death of the prophet, we see killings. These Caliphs, they were killed, brutally killed by people. And after their death, after the four Caliphs, I don't see any Islamic state. Islamic civilisation certainly had that vitality, maintained its vitality for many centuries, in fact, but that state was not...it was not an Islamic empire anywhere.

One factor that appeared to play an important role in the profound shift away from Islam as a comprehensive worldview was that he had become very impressed with the idea and value of Western individualism. As he said, "People here are more individualistic. That's a good value, yes, I think it is. For me, in fact, that's the only value."

A second factor that appeared to contribute to his shift away from Islam was his experience of Australia as an ordered, lawful society. He was particularly impressed with the freedom individuals had here, compared to his own society.

When I look at these Western societies, I see organised, orderly, lawful societies. There is a great respect for individual liberty, and that's why I love Western societies. I love to live in Australia and I don't mind living in the US, though I think Australia is a better society than the US, but the US is a more creative society perhaps. And I like these societies because they're lawful, and they have respect for individual liberty. In my society there was no respect for individual liberty.

But Muslim societies, and third world societies which are not industrial societies, these are lawless societies, these are corrupt societies and they have too many problems to cope with. I'll tell you, its very difficult for me to go back, because its a lawless society, its a corrupt society.

Having become impressed with what he saw as the superior quality of life in the West, he became convinced that Islam could no longer solve the world's problems.

Now in the book Post Modernism and Islam, it says that Islam offers or promises something to the world, it offers a solution. Now, this is nonsense. If you have a belief, you know, you can say that, and you can be forgiven, but if you claim to be a scholar, a rational person, then you can't tell me that Islam is the solution for all the ills of the world, and this kind of argument. That's why I think that these people are not scholars because their language is not scholar. When you say that Islam is the solution of the world, how can you expect that person to be a scholar?

And a third factor that appeared to play an important role in his profound shift of perspective was that, as a political science/economics student, he had replaced Islam as a frame of reference for analysing national and international issues with a number of the analytical paradigms taught in his course of study. For example, he now viewed national and international issues simply as political struggles, and Islam as just one of the political actors seeking power.

It's a political issue, it's appropriation of the state that is at the basis of the issue. They want to control the state, these Muslims, so they are not really addressing the reality. They are in search of an ideal, and an Islamic state provides that ideal. Basically it's politics.

I'm not concerned about good and bad, I'm concerned with power, in fact, and the resistance, so I see it in that light, that there is this power, this Western power and that we see this resistance. Like Foucault says "Where there is power, there is resistance." Muslim societies, they're powerless societies, reacting against the Western world, which has power, and dominates the discourse. So it's a power conflict, it's a political conflict.

A second analytical perspective he made reference to was "industrialisation". He became particularly convinced, for example, that industrialisation was singularly the most important process in the development of a nation. He explained,

Industrialisation, it's not a Western value - well, you can say it's Western in the sense that industry is a Western thing, you know. It happened in the West. It could have happened in the East or somewhere else. So it's an accident, nobody can explain how it happened, you know, industrialisation. It's not because of Christianity. It's not because of Greek civilisation. It's not because of the Roman Empire. No, it's not because of Western civilisation. It could have happened somewhere else. Like this printer - paper and printing - we see in China. Before the West, we see it in China. But Chinese society didn't become industrialised for some reason. I don't know, only sociologists and anthropologists and historians can explain why it was.

He in fact now believed that industrialisation was more crucial to national development and "progress" than religion. When asked whether Islam could contribute to the development of a modern, industrialised state, for example, he replied, "No, it's not for religion." He went on to explain that as far as he was concerned, religions, like Islam and Christianity, were indeed global religions, but capable only of articulating utopian ideals.

I don't think that it was Christianity which contributed to industrialisation. No, I don't see that. As I said, you know, it was an accident, this industrialisation. But yes, people do worry about this question, whether Islam can contribute or whether Islam can stop that kind of thing. No, I don't think it can. One thing is it can't. The other thing is it doesn't. Industrial societies can't have rules which are not changeable. They change and their rules also change, so they don't have divine rules. Any industrial society which has divine rules cannot really progress. It's not possible, because divine rules are about unchangeability, they never change.

A third perspective he made reference to during the interview – and one that appeared to function like a lens through which he now interpreted developments in his own nation - was "political culture", and the role of political elites in the development of nations in the non-Western world. Stripped of its previous role as blueprint for social and political

development, Islam was now viewed simply as a tool that political elites made use of to manipulate the masses. As he explained,

And there's another important thing which we must bear in mind when we look at this thing, whether Islam can contribute to this road of progress or development. As I said, the ideas of Westernisation, and modernisation, come to them through the elite. It is not in the society. The elite, they can never relate to the elite, because they are somewhere, aloof. They are not to be touched. In our society, the elite have a different class, a different status. They hold the power, and they have nothing to do with the people, with the majority of the people. Their culture is different, they behave differently. Their morality is different, their belief system is different. They might be believing in the same Islam, but their interpretations are different, of Islam from the masses of the people. Their interpretation is totally different. To the elite, Islam is a political power, and it gives a sense of identity in a different way.

And a fourth factor that appeared to play an important role in this student's shift away from Islam as a comprehensive worldview was that he had become increasingly disillusioned with Islam after the Iranian revolution. As he continued to compare the development of the Western world with that of the Islamic world in his degree course, he became so convinced that Islam was incapable of contributing to a modern nation state, that he fervently hoped Muslims - and particularly Muslim fundamentalists - would never gain political power in his own country.

I don't see any social justice and equality in reality in the future, if - God forbid - they get power...like in Iran. I don't see that Iran is a better society than the Shah's society. It's as repressive as the Shah's society.

But the only difference is - and this gives a great sense of pride to the Iranian people - that the Iranian ruling class today is their own native class. As Americans say, they can say that they are their own "sons of bitches". Today they can have that culture, national pride, even if they have nothing to eat, or even if they have no freedom. I don't see any freedom there. It's a repressive society still.

For this student, then, studying in the West appeared to be a catalyst for a radical re-evaluation of previous concepts, and the subsequent replacement of Islam as a comprehensive worldview with a new paradigm - industrialisation. He now felt that in its present state, Islam itself was an obstacle to progress, and thus had little (if anything) to contribute to future global development.

Summary

This chapter had three specific aims:

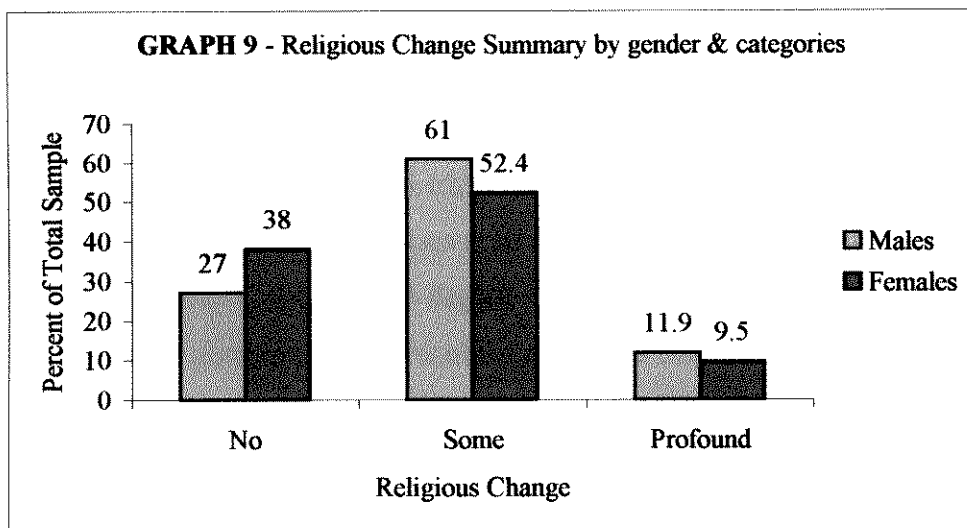
- 1) To examine in detail the nature and extent of changes to the religious a) practices and b) ideas and/or patterns of thought of Muslims studying at university in the West.

- 2) To analyse some of the ways students themselves accounted for their experiences in/and responses to the culture and ideas of the West, and illustrate some of the themes and patterns visible in their accounts.
- 3) To consider whether the secularisation thesis is a valid and suitable framework for explaining the changes that occurred.

Despite the fact that student experiences in the West varied considerably, there were distinct categories of response among the students:

- 1) Students who experienced *NO RELIGIOUS CHANGE*.
- 2) Students who experienced *SOME RELIGIOUS CHANGE*.
- 3) Students who experienced *PROFOUND RELIGIOUS CHANGE*.

The following graph illustrates Religious Change according to gender and categories of response.



NO RELIGIOUS CHANGE

This study has shown that in Sample (A), twelve students (30%), and in Sample (B), twelve students (30%) indicated that they had not changed any of their religious practices or ideas since coming to the West to study. Based on their accounts, it would appear that these students did not become "secularised" in any way (that is, in terms of practices or patterns of thought) during their time in Australia.

A greater percentage of females (38% of total females) than males (27% of total males) reported "no change" to their religious values or ideas. Among the males, the Undergraduate students had the greatest percentage that experienced no change (31% of male Undergraduates), while among the female students the PhD category had the greatest percentage that experienced no change (50% of female PhD's).

There were two salient factors which appeared to play an important role in the experiences of students in Sample (A). **First**, some viewed Western ideas and values as a threat to Islam. For these students, living in the West represented a challenge to avoid the many moral and philosophical pitfalls awaiting the unwary Muslim. And **second**, others viewed the West as inferior to Islam. One student, for example, declared that he would never change his religious beliefs or be influenced by Western culture or ideas because the West had nothing to offer.

SOME RELIGIOUS CHANGE

This study has shown that in Sample (A), twenty-three students (57.5%), and in Sample (B), twenty-four students (60%), for a total of forty-seven students (58.7%), experienced some change to their religious practices and/or ideas during their time in the West. More males (61% of total males) than females (52.4% of total females) reported that they experienced some change to their religious practices and/or ideas since coming to the West to study. Among the males, the Masters degree students had the greatest percentage who said they experienced some change (65% of male Masters students), while among the females, the Undergraduate students had the greatest percentage (80% of female Undergraduates) who reported that they had experienced some change. There were three sub-groupings of students within this category.

2.1 Less Practice - Same Commitment

In Sample (A), three students (7.5), and in Sample (B), three students (7.5%), for a total of six students (7.5%) indicated that they practised their religion less after arriving in the West than before. Some had difficulties praying regularly, for example, because of the lack of a Muslim prayer call, or Muslim friends to remind them of prayer times. Others found that their timetable was very full, or that their husband was less enthusiastic with religion after

arriving in Australia. Despite these, and other difficulties, however, these students maintained the same level of commitment to/and belief in Islam that they had before coming.

A greater percentage of females (14.3% of total females) than males (5.1% of total males) reported that they practised their religion less, and yet remained the same in terms of their Islamic ideas. This may have been due to the fact that in many Islamic cultures it is inappropriate for single women to travel long distances alone, and in Australia many of the mosques were quite far from the university student accommodation. The Undergraduate degree level had the highest percentage of both males (6.3% of male Undergraduates) and females (20% of female Undergraduates) in this category.

There appeared to be several factors that contributed to the resolve by these students to maintain the same level of commitment they had before coming.

- One realised the importance of maintaining a spiritual life in the midst of a non-Islamic culture.
- One felt that the West was anti-Islamic, and that maintaining her Islamic identity, therefore, was a priority.
- One was motivated by the increasing lack of interest in Islam by her husband and children since arriving in Australia

2.2 Less Practice - More Islamic

In Sample (A), five students (12.5%) and in Sample (B), four students (10%), for a combined total of nine students (11.2%) said they practised their religion less after arriving in the West than before. Because of their study schedule or distance from a mosque, some had difficulties praying regularly, for example. Others found that the lecture times clashed with obligatory prayer times, or that *halal* food was often not available on campus. Despite these and other difficulties with their religious practices, students in this group appeared to become more Islamic in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought during their time in Australia.

More males (13.6% of total males) than females (4.8% of total females) reported that they practised their religion less in Australia, and yet appeared to become more Islamic in terms of ideas and/or patterns of thought. The PhD degree students had the greatest percentage in

this category, among both the males (17.4% of male PhD's), and females (10% of female PhD's). There were a number of ways these students became more Islamic in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought:

- They became increasingly convinced of the importance of religion in their lives and became more committed to Islam than before.
- They developed a greater desire to study Islam and become more knowledgeable about it.
- They were strengthened in their belief that Islam is the only true pathway to God.
- They became more aware of a spiritual dimension to life, and as a result, more desirous to seek after God.
- They became more convinced that religious values are important in order to build a better society.

Based on these findings, it would appear that these students did not become "secularised" in terms of ideas and/or patterns of thought during their time in the West.

There were a number of factors that appeared to contribute to the changes experienced by these students. **First**, many were challenged by the questions they were asked about their Islamic religion by other non-Muslim students. Having to find answers to questions often inspired a greater appreciation of their own Islamic traditions, and motivated them to become more committed. **Second**, the West was viewed as a culture without religious values, and people's lives therefore directionless and empty. Students with this view often said they came to realise the importance of religion after coming here, and were motivated here towards a greater involvement. **Third**, Western culture was viewed as too materialistic. As a result, some felt an even greater desire to concentrate on developing their spiritual values.

2.3 Same Practice - More Islamic

In Sample (A), five students (12.5%), and in Sample (B), ten students (25%), for a combined total of fifteen students (18.7%), said they had not changed any of their religious practices since coming to the West. Despite practising the same, however, they appeared to have become more Islamic in terms of their thinking.

More females (28.6% of total females) than males (15% of total males) reported that they practised their religion the same in Australia, and yet appeared to become more Islamic in terms of ideas. The Undergraduate students had the greatest percentage in this category, for both males (18.8% of male Undergraduates) and females (60% of female Undergraduates).

While some of the students in this group experienced changes similar to those experienced by students in the previous group - and for some of the same reasons - there were several other ways these students became more Islamic in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought:

- They became more convinced of the importance of their Islamic cultural heritage.
- They developed a greater appreciation for Islamic ideas and values than before.
- They enlisted reason more now in order to re-adjust and refine their understanding of Islamic principles.

This finding would indicate that these students did not become "secularised" in terms of ideas and/or patterns of thought during their time in Australia.

There were a number of factors which played an important role in the experience of these students. **First**, some of these students were challenged to become more knowledgeable about Islam during their time in Australia because they were often asked questions about their religion that required further study. **Second**, as they interacted with students from other religious traditions, they were inspired to become more committed. **Third**, some students became more convinced of the importance of religion in their lives after observing what they perceived as the spiritual deficiency of the West. **Fourth**, as a result of living in a non-Islamic culture, some developed a new appreciation for their own Islamic traditions. And **fifth**, some students found that they began to think more about Islam as a result of developing analytical skills in their studies, and for these students, more thinking often led to new insights concerning Islamic principles.

2.4 More practice - More Islamic.

In Sample (A), ten students (25%), and in Sample (B), seven students (17.5%), for a combined total of seventeen students (21.3%), said they practised their religion more after coming to the West than they did before. In addition, it appeared they had become more Islamic in their thinking as well.

More males (27% of total males) than females (4.8% of total females) reported that they practised their religion more in the West and also became more Islamic in terms of ideas. Among the males, the Masters degree students had the greatest percentage in this category (35% of male Masters students), while among the females, the Undergraduate students had the greatest percentage in this category (20% of female Undergraduates).

There were a number of ways these students became more Islamic in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought:

- They were more serious now about maintaining their Islamic practices.
- They became convinced that there were good reasons for certain Islamic practices and values, which previously they were sceptical of.
- They were strengthened in their identity as Muslims.
- They became more confident and outspoken about their beliefs around non-Muslims.
- They became bolder, often entering into discussions and debates with students from other religious traditions.
- They developed a burden to see the Islamic world become great once again.
- They became convinced that Islam was indeed a comprehensive worldview and blueprint for all of society.
- They increased in their opposition to the "de-Islamisation" of their societies.

This finding would indicate that these students did not become "secularised" in terms of ideas and/or patterns of thought during their time in Australia.

There were a number of factors which played a role in the experiences of these students. **First**, they viewed Western culture as morally and spiritually dangerous, and, as a result, sought to guard against being influenced by getting more involved in religious activities. **Second**, some students were inspired towards a greater commitment because of what they viewed as Western decadence. **Third**, the perceived lack of religion, and excessive personal freedom in the West led some to a greater appreciation of their Islamic traditions. **Fourth**, some students found their experience in the West a catalyst for growth and maturity in terms of their Islamic identity. **Fifth**, some developed a greater knowledge of Islam as a result of discussions with students from other religious traditions. **Sixth**, one student was motivated into a greater commitment to the Islamic world as a whole after observing the lack of integrity among Muslims in Australia. **Seventh**, for one student, the freedom he had

in Australia from the religious coercion and political correctness he experienced back in his own country contributed to a desire to practice his religion more fervently and earnestly than before. And **eighth**, the perceived lack of religious values in the West was an inspiration for one student to a more sincere and active involvement than before.

PROFOUND RELIGIOUS CHANGE

This study has shown that in Sample (A), five students (12.5%), and in Sample (B), four students (10%) for a combined total of nine students (11.3%) indicated they had experienced profound change to their religious practices and/or ideas during their time in the West. There were more males (11.9% of total males) than females (4.8% of total females) in this category. Among the males, the PhD degree students had the greatest percentage in this category (17.4% of male PhD's), while among the females, the Masters degree students had the greatest percentage in this category (16.7% of female Masters students). There were two sub-groupings of students within this category.

3.1 More practice - Less Islamic

In Sample (A), three students (7.5%), and in Sample (B), zero students (0%), for a total of three students (7.5%), said they practised their religion more in Australia, and yet who appeared to move away from an Islamic perspective in some areas of their thinking.

More females (4.8% of total females) than males (3.4% of total males) reported that they practised their religion more in Australia, and yet appeared to be less Islamic in terms of ideas and/or patterns of thought. Among the males, the Undergraduate students had the greatest percentage in this category (5% of males Undergraduates), while among the females, the PhD. degree students had the greatest percentage (10% of female PhD's).

The ideas and/or patterns of thought of these students became less Islamic in a number of ways:

- One student no longer viewed Islam as a comprehensive worldview with principles for every area of life.
- One student became open to new religious perspectives, adopting the idea that all religions teach much the same thing in terms of morality and that all religions worship the same God.

- One student became increasingly critical of some Islamic religious practices, and developed empathy for other religious worldviews.

This finding would indicate that these students had indeed become "secularised" in terms of ideas and/or patterns of thought during their time in Australia.

There were several factors which appeared to play an important role in the changes experienced by these students. **First**, one student had adopted a Western, humanist perspective on religion, viewing religion no longer as a matter of truth or cosmic significance, but simply a matter of personal preference. **Second**, one student adopted a Western humanist perspective that all religious worldviews are equally valid, and therefore what is needed is to be tolerant of all perspectives. And **third**, one student had adopted a Western humanist perspective which prioritises the role of reason over that of religion in understanding and analysing the world we live in.

3.2 Less Practice - Less Islamic

In Sample (A), there were two students (5%), and in Sample (B), four students (10%), for a combined total of six students (7.5%), who said they practised their religion less in Australia and who also appeared to become less Islamic in terms of their thinking.

More males (8.5% of total males) than females (4.8% of total females) reported that they practised their religion less, and also appeared to become less Islamic in terms of ideas and/or patterns of thought. Among the males, the PhD degree students had the greatest percentage in this category (13% of male PhD's), while among the females, the Masters degree students had the greatest percentage (16.7% of female Masters students) in this category.

The ideas and/or patterns of thought of the two students in Sample (A) appeared to change in a number of ways:

- One student moved away from the perspective that Islam is a worldview with principles for every area of life to the view that religion is just a matter of personal preference.
- One student rejected Islam as a worldview capable of contributing to the development of a modern society.

This finding would indicate that these students had indeed become "secularised" in terms of ideas and/or patterns of thought during their time in Australia.

There were several factors that appeared to contribute to the changes experienced by these students. **First**, one student adopted a Western humanist perspective which prioritises the role of reason over revelation in understanding and analysing the world we live in. **Second**, one student became disillusioned with Islam after contrasting the development of the modern, industrialised West with the Islamic world, and concluding as a result that Islam was incapable of contributing to the development of a modern nation.

In summary, then, this study has shown that 30% of the students overall experienced no change to their religious practices or ideas during their time in the West. This finding would indicate these students did not become "secularised" in any way. A further 58.7% experienced some change to their religious practices, some practising their religion less than before coming to Australia, some the same, and some more than before. Interestingly, however, all of the students in this second group either remained the same, or become more Islamic in terms of their **ideas and/or patterns of thought** since arriving in Australia. This too would indicate that, like the first group, these students did not become "secularised" in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought during their time in the West. And a final 11.3% of the students experienced profound change to their religious ideas and/or patterns of thought, moving away from an Islamic perspective in several important ways. This finding would indicate that these particular students had indeed become "secularised" during their time in Australia.

Given, then, that 30% of the students interviewed did not change any of their religious practices or ideas since coming to the West, and a further 58.7% either remained the same or became more Islamic in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought for a total of 88.7%, it would appear that in general, the secularisation thesis does not hold as an explanation of the religious experiences of this select group of Muslim university students who have come to the West to study.

The findings of this chapter have some important implications for the "secularisation" thesis. The current understanding of "secularisation" needs to be expanded to include changes that

can occur to the religious ideas, and/or patterns of thought of an individual. In its present form, as a framework for explaining changes only to religious practices, rituals, and/or behaviour - but not ideas and/or thinking - it is of limited use.

This study has shown that religious change can occur on two levels: a) practice and b) ideas and/or patterns of thought. The findings of this study show that there was no direct correlation between a decline in religious practices and a decline in religious consciousness, bringing into question not only some of the ways the secularisation thesis has been utilised to date as a theory for explaining religious change, but also some of the conclusions that have been made as a result concerning the extent of religious "decline" in contemporary society.

What is needed is a theory that is able to account for change on each of these levels, given that changes can/and do occur in diverse ways, in varying degrees, and in numerous combinations. There appear to be several options at this point.

1. Sub-divide secularisation into two categories - (that is, changes to practices, and changes to ideas) - and examine each category separately or in terms of each of the various combinations.
2. Continue to define secularisation in terms of changes to religious practice and/or rituals, and come up with new terms to describe ideational changes (for example, worldview changes).
3. Change the definition of secularisation so that it refers exclusively to ideational change, and devise new terms to describe changes to religious practice and/or rituals. The "secularisation of the mind", then, would refer to a decrease in religious ideas and/or patterns of thinking, but no longer to decreases in religious practice. A decrease in religious practice would be called just that, or something else, but would not be considered as an indicator of secularisation *per se*.
4. Abandon "secularisation" as an explanation of religious change in contemporary society, because it currently does not distinguish between changes to religious practices and changes to ideas, and therefore cannot adequately account for the subtle changes that can occur to a person's religious ideas and/or patterns of thinking as an area of inquiry separate from practices. Given that individuals may have many pragmatic or practical reasons for not praying or attending places or worship as frequently (such as time

constraints, distance to place of worship, etcetera), arguments that rely for their validity on the premise that decreases in the frequency of religious practices indicate secularisation are flawed. Indeed, as this study has shown, in the case of Muslim university students, a decrease in religious practice did not indicate that students had become "secularised" in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thinking at all.

One option is to replace secularisation with "worldview change" as a framework for examining religious change. This term has the advantage of being flexible enough to account for change to both ideas and practices. Phrases such as "less Islamic" or "more Islamic", can then be used as descriptions of change to either practices or ideas, and are in any case better descriptions of the direction of religious change than "secularisation".

Whatever the approach, one thing is clear. In its present form, the secularisation thesis requires further refinement if it is to continue being useful as a framework for explaining both ideational change and changes to the religious practices of Muslim university students who have come to the West to study.

1. By the phrase "more Islamic" I mean that the religious ideas of Muslim individuals have become more consistent with the worldview premises of Islam than before. In other words, they have modified or replaced certain ideas that are contradictory to an Islamic worldview with ideas that are consistent with it. An example of a Muslim who became "more Islamic" in terms of practices might be one who now went to the mosque each Friday, whereas before, he went infrequently. An example of a Muslim who became "more Islamic" in terms of ideas and/or thinking might be one who may or may not go to the mosque regularly, but who now thinks it is important to do so because it is part of what it means to be a good Muslim.

2. See J. Black, *Eighteenth Century Europe 1700-1789*, Macmillan, London, 1990. Black suggested that the Enlightenment was "a tendency towards critical inquiry and the application of reason" (p. 208).

3. This student's shift to reason and away from revelation as a framework for understanding the world around him contrasted sharply with one student in the "no change" category (1: Indonesia, male, married, 39, PhD, 3 years) who believed that reason and revelation each had their own domain of activity and authority. As this student said, reason and religion appeared to be mutually exclusive as analytical frameworks. He explained,

Using reason? Uh, I think that is okay...that's good. That's one thing I need to learn from West, from Western people - try to make everything rational, you know. But rational in regard to what? In our worldly life, we should be rational. But in other life, like religious life, you can't ask people to be rational. That's a different thing.

4. Esposito writes that "devout Muslims, many with university educations" today are "caught amid the conflicts" concerning the extent to which Islamic law should be enforced in Islamic countries, and that as a result some "prefer a secular state and culture to a religious one because it can promise democracy and free expression" (1995:24). In the case of this particular student, his resentment towards heavy-handed religious "correctness" and subsequent desire for a secular state may be motivated by the situation in his own country, for, as Esposito notes, Iran is "the only Muslim society governed by religious officials and Islamic law" (Ibid. p. 25).

CHAPTER EIGHT

RETURNING TO MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CHANGE

Thus far, this study has shown that some students experienced changes to their moral ideas and/or patterns of thought, and others to their religious ideas and/or patterns of thought. An important question that arises at this point is whether any students experienced change to both their moral and religious ideas and/or patterns of thought, and if so, why? In order to shed some more light on the moral and religious experiences of Muslim students in the West, and to understand further some of the factors that contributed to those experiences, this chapter consists of a comparison and summary of moral change (chapter five) together with religious change (chapter seven).

There are nine combinations of responses possible in a comparison of the results of chapter five with those of chapter seven. They are:

- 1) No moral change - No religious change
- 2) No moral change - Some religious change
- 3) No moral change - Profound religious change
- 4) Some moral change - No religious change
- 5) Some moral change - Some religious change
- 6) Some moral change - Profound religious change
- 7) Profound moral change - No religious change
- 8) Profound moral change - Some religious change
- 9) Profound moral change - Profound religious change

Given the constraints of time, and word limit, however, only two of the nine combinations of responses possible will be examined. The two combinations this discussion will examine are a) those students who experienced **no change** to **either** their moral or religious ideas and/or values, (number 1 above), and b) those students who experienced **profound change** to **both** their moral ideas and/or values (number 9 above). It also contains a brief discussion of some of the implications of these findings for the Westernisation and secularisation hypotheses.

No Change To Moral or Religious Ideas

This study has shown that the following students experienced no change to either their moral or religious ideas during their time in the West.

Sample (A)

- 1) Student (1) Indonesia, male, 38, PhD
- 2) Student (6) Kuwait, male, 30, Masters
- 3) Student (7) Ghana, male, 30, Masters
- 4) Student (14) Malaysia, male, 23, Undergraduate
- 5) Student (33) Bosnia, female, 26, PhD
- 6) Student (35) Libya, male, 39, PhD
- 7) Student (39) Bangladesh, female, 34, PhD

Sample (B)

- 1) Student (3) Malaysia, male, 20, Undergraduate
- 2) Student (7) Indonesia, male, 26, Masters
- 3) Student (18) Maldives, male, 37, PhD
- 4) Student (19) Malaysia, female, 40, PhD
- 5) Student (20) Malaysia, male, 40, PhD
- 6) Student (23) Indonesia, male, 38, PhD
- 7) Student (28) India, male, 23, Undergraduate
- 8) Student (35) Saudi Arabia, male, 27, Undergraduate
- 9) Student (36) Saudi Arabia, male, 32, PhD

While recognising that further research is required in order to furnish precise explanations for the lack of change experienced by these students in either category (moral or religious ideas/patterns of thought), it is possible to offer some hints at this point as to why these students responded in the way they did. The following discussion is intended to identify some of the factors that appear to have been influential in contributing to the experiences of students who said they had not changed in any way (in terms of moral or religious values and ideas).

Sample (A)

Student (1) This Indonesian male, 38 years of age, appeared to have already decided the values that would guide his life and so was not open to change. He was also married and had his children with him, providing a family context that limited the kinds of social and cultural activities he could participate in. Being from Indonesia, a country familiar with the West and its culture through its long colonial history, there was little in Australia - in terms of values and philosophies - that was new to him. So, as he said himself, there was no reason to change.

Student (6) This student from Kuwait had a conservative religious background and upbringing. In addition, his family had warned him against the philosophical distractions and moral dangers in Western culture. Given his strong family values - which included moral accountability to each other and the concept of maintaining family honour and a good name - this student was unlikely to be tempted by what the West had to offer.

Student (7) This student had made a commitment to himself before coming that he would be a good Muslim, and as such achieve success in life. As his family back home were non-Muslim, he appeared to want to set an example for them, and be someone they could take pride in. He also attributed his achievement in obtaining a scholarship to study in Australia to Allah and Islam, and, as a result, was not open to changing any of his values.

Student (14) This student, from Malaysia, had a conservative Islamic background, and he had already been exposed to Western values as a result of living in a country that has close links (especially educational) with many Western nations, including Australia. His exposure to Malaysia's diverse religious traditions helped ensure that after having decided to follow Islam, he was not going to change.

Student (33) As a Bosnian living in Serbia before coming to Australia, this student had already experienced life in the West. As a result, she already had a broad understanding of the challenges and pitfalls of Western culture. In addition, while living in Serbia, she had made a deliberate decision to become a Muslim, thereby taking on the identity of a persecuted religious minority. It was unlikely that there was anything in Australia she had not seen before, and that could tempt her to change.

Student (35) This student, from Libya, also had a conservative Islamic background, and appeared cautious and predisposed to avoid change. He was also single-minded in terms of getting a degree, and had come to the West because of the high standard of research and facilities, not in order to experience a new cultural and religious context. In addition, he had lived in several other Western nations (Ireland, USA, Spain, Netherlands, Italy) and as a result was unlikely to adopt Western values now.

Student (39) This student, from Bangladesh, was married and had her daughter with her, limiting the extent to which she could participate in cultural and social activities outside the home. Coming from Bangladesh, she was also conditioned to accept, (she said), that a woman's place was in the home, in submission to her husband and his family. As a result of her cultural constraints, where women did not have - nor expect - much freedom, she viewed Western women as too free, and was hesitant to step outside the cultural and religious boundaries imposed on her.

Sample (B)

Given the limitations of a survey questionnaire (that is, the format does not allow for much detail or depth in terms of life experiences or perspectives) it is not possible to provide an analysis of the broader context of the students' experiences from Sample (B), the survey questionnaire. Several things appear salient among this group, however. First, most of these students come from relatively conservative Islamic countries (that is, Saudi Arabia (2), Malaysia (3), Indonesia (2)), where Islam is endorsed and supported at a state level. And second, these students all stated in the questionnaire that Islam was **very** important to them, indicating they had a high level of commitment that would not likely be compromised during their time in Australia.

Profound Change To Moral AND Religious Ideas

This study has shown that the following students experienced profound change to both their moral and religious values and ideas during their time in the West.

Sample (A)

- 1) Student (2) Pakistan, male, 38, Masters
- 2) Student (23) Iran, male, 30, PhD

3) Student (26) Iran, male, 31, PhD

Sample (B)

- 1) Student (8) Iran, male, 31, PhD
- 2) Student (9) Pakistan, male, 33, PhD
- 3) Student (14) China, male, 29, Masters
- 4) Student (38) Indonesia, female, 26, Masters

Some hints will now be offered as to why this group of students responded in the way they did.

Sample (A)

Student (2) This student appeared to be influenced more than any other by the course he was taking at university. He was the only student taking political science, a discipline that utilises a broad range of theories and analytical frameworks in order to examine and understand national and international issues. Due to his resentment of the often corrupt nature of the relationship between Islam and the state in Pakistan, and his exposure to the alternative perspectives and paradigms for nation building presented in his discipline, he appeared to be intellectually "converted" to many Western ideas and values during his time in the West.

Students (23 & 26) These two students were from Iran, and were both studying sociology at the PhD level. Given their sociological background and approach to understanding issues in society, they were both sensitised to the various roles religion can sometimes play in the interaction between interest groups in society, and the ways religious discourse can sometimes be used to enforce and maintain the power and position of elites in contemporary society. Given their dissatisfaction with the state of Islam in their own society, and the opportunities they enjoyed in the West to encounter and experience Western moral values and philosophies, they willingly shed (albeit temporarily) their religiosity, and sought new ways to define "spirituality".

Sample (B)

Again, due to the limitations of a survey questionnaire method, it is not possible to provide a satisfactory in-depth analysis at this point of the broader social context of these students' experiences. Several comments can be made, however. First, the student from China (14), having been freed temporarily from the political and social constraints imposed on individuals in a communist state, would have enjoyed the unique opportunity to freely sample a Western lifestyle. In addition, his minimal understanding and commitment to Islam - evidenced in several of his answers to survey questions - may have contributed to a somewhat casual approach to maintaining a commitment to Islamic ideas and values during his time in the West. Second, it is most likely that the student from Iran (8) adopted some of the Western perspectives, values and ideas that the other Iranian students from Sample (A) adopted.

Given that only one female (Student 38) out of twenty-one experienced profound change to both her moral and religious ideas and/or values, and given that this finding was obtained from the survey questionnaire sample, I re-examined her answers to the survey questions in order to be sure that my interpretation was correct. The following responses given by this student satisfactorily indicate (in my view) that she indeed experienced profound change to both her moral and religious ideas during her time in the West. In answers to specific survey questions she indicated that...

- She was less sure now that governments would be better if they were Islamic.
- She was less sure now that Muslims should be involved in politics.
- She was less sure the best form of government would be an Islamic state.
- She viewed the West more positively now.
- She now believed euthanasia was morally acceptable (she ticked the "moderately agree" box in this question).
- She now believed that individuals have the right to view pornographic videos (again, she ticked the "moderately agree" box).
- She indicated it was **very** important now to make decisions without consulting her family.
- She indicated it was **very** important to her to have Western friends.

The Salient Factors in Moral and/or Religious Change

Despite the fact that there was a wide variation in the responses of students in this study to life in the West, and also in the accounts they gave of their experiences and perspectives, this study has found that the intensity of the Western cultural and philosophical influence appeared to be largely a function of the following factors.

- 1) Attitude of the student - particularly towards their Islamic culture and identity, and towards their time in West (whether just for study, or to experience Western ideas and values).
- 2) Perceptions of the West before coming – particularly if they developed their images of the West from watching movies back home, or through their local media.
- 3) Islamic background - whether strong or weak. In addition, the nature and extent of the student family's commitment to Islam was an important factor.
- 4) Political situation back home - especially where Islam is being used as an instrument of political or social control, and/or repression.
- 5) Experience of Western values/ideas - especially the idea of the right of women to increased freedom of movement and opportunities for self-development. While it is granted that these values may, after all, be Islamic too, an important factor in the way the student responded to these values in the West appeared to be the degree to which the student's home culture placed restrictions on the freedom and movement of women in that culture, and whether those restrictions were explained to them as being sound Islamic practice.
- 6) Disciplinary focus - particularly where the student encountered new paradigms and frameworks for understanding national and global issues (for examples: overpopulation theory, emancipation from patriarchal cultural patterns for women, Industrialisation, globalisation). In general, it appeared that the study of law and the social sciences produced a deeper influence than the study of science or technology.

This study found that there was no obvious or **direct** correlation in any category between change (cultural or religious), and other factors such as a) level of degree (Undergraduate, Masters, PhD), b) gender, c) age, d) length of time in Australia, and e) the particular university attended. While this study did not attempt to examine each of these factors separately, it would appear that they did not play any **major** role in contributing to the particular changes experienced by the students. Despite the lack of any clear correlation

between cultural and/or religious change and the above factors, however, there was some suggestion that several of these factors may indeed have contributed in part to the changes experienced by the students. While it is admitted that further research isolating and examining each of these factors would be necessary to confirm or deny the extent to which they contributed to change, the following impressions will be offered at this point.

First, the fact that the PhD level had the highest percentage of students in the “profound moral change” category (see Graph 4), as well as the highest percentage in the “profound religious change” category (see Graph 8), suggests that study at the PhD level in some way may contribute in a greater way to a pattern of thinking whereby an individual becomes less attached to moral and/or religious absolutes than study at the Undergraduate or Masters degree level. This is admittedly nothing more than speculation at this point, but this development may in part be due to the somewhat unique intellectual journey students embark upon when pursuing PhD studies (especially in the social sciences) where they are exposed to a broad range of theoretical frameworks, paradigms and concepts, many of which appear to challenge traditional moral and religious reference points.

Second, the fact that the Undergraduate students had the highest percentage in the “some moral change” category (see Graph 3), as well as the highest percentage in the “some religious change” category (see Graph 7), suggests that university study even at the Undergraduate level exposes students to a sufficiently broad range of theoretical and philosophical perspectives to challenge traditional moral and religious reference points. This study has shown, for example, that many students at the Undergraduate level were willing to make adjustments to their moral and religious ideas, but not necessarily to abandon or to drastically modify them. Interestingly, however, in terms of religious ideas and values, the direction of change experienced by these students was more **towards** an Islamic perspective than away from it, while in terms of their moral ideas and values, most moved towards distinctly Western perspectives. This finding suggests that for these Muslim students, then, university study in the West served as a catalyst for increasing their commitment to religious ideas, while at the same time for decreasing their commitment to Islamic cultural/moral ideas.

However, a caution is required at this point. Despite the fact that this explanation holds for many of the Undergraduate students in this study, it certainly does not hold for **all**. The Undergraduate level, for example, also had the highest percentage of students in the “no moral change” category (see Graph 2). It must be noted, however, that the majority of those were males. When the gender factor is added to the equation, then, a vastly different picture emerges. As Graph 3 and Graph 7 show, it is the female Undergraduate students who experience both more moral and more religious change than males. Based on these findings, then, it cannot be established – and indeed seems unlikely - that the factor of studying at the Undergraduate level alone is sufficient to precipitate change in Muslim students in the West. In relation to moral and/or religious change, then, it would appear that gender is more determinative of change than degree level. Some comments are appropriate at this point concerning the role that gender also appeared to play in the change experienced by some students.

Gender appeared to play a role in the change experienced by students in this study in several ways. First, the fact that females in all degree categories appeared to be more open and willing to change some of their moral values than males (see Graph 3), and that many of the changes represented an endorsement of such Western values as increased autonomy and freedom for women, suggests that the issue of gender equality is one of the most pressing in the Islamic world today, and that demands for increased personal freedom and equality for women will continue to dominate the agendas of Muslim women in Islamic societies for some time to come.

Second, the fact that female students (Masters and PhD levels only) had the highest percentage in the “no religious change” category (see Graph 6), suggests that the issue of gender is an important one in Muslim societies when it comes to making decisions about modifying religious practices or adapting religious principles to different contexts. It is just an impression at this point, but it may be that many of the female students in this study did not feel that as females they were free to change their religious values, practices or ideas without consultation with either their families, or those in their society recognised as legitimate religious authorities (usually males in Islamic cultures). In other words, it would appear that gender is a very important criterion in Muslim cultures when it comes to the kinds of decisions that individuals are free to make.

Age did not appear to be a major factor in the moral or religious change experienced by the students in this study. The ages of the students ranged between twenty and forty-two years. There were three broad groupings of ages:

- a) 20 – 27 (There were thirty-six students in this group)
- b) 28 – 35 (There were twenty-six students in this group)
- c) 36 – 42 (There were eighteen students in this group)

The average age among the total sample was thirty-one years, with males averaging thirty years, and females averaging thirty-two years. There was some indication, however, that age may have been a factor - though perhaps not the only factor - in some situations of change, given the following findings.

- 1) The highest percentage of students in the “no moral change” category (that is, 42%) **and** the “no religious change” categories (that is, 41.7%) were in the youngest age grouping (20-27 years).
- 2) The highest percentage of students in the “some moral change” category (that is, 54%) **and** the “some religious change” category (that is, 48.9%) were **also** in the youngest age grouping (20-27 years).

The above findings would seem to indicate that younger students were more likely to experience a broader range of responses to life in the West than the other two age groupings. While some of these younger students were more conservative and resistant to change than students in the two older age groupings, there were others who appeared to be very open - more open than the other age groups - to moral and religious change. The younger age grouping, in other words, represented those who were simultaneously more open to change, and also more resistant to change.

While it would be difficult to draw firm conclusions at this point regarding the precise role that age played in these findings, it would seem - given that younger students are still in the formative stages of deciding moral and religious values – that they are more impressionable. At the same time, they are also more likely to view the West as a threat, given that for many, this was the first time they had ventured outside their own nations and/or Islamic cultures. Further research would be required to confirm these impressions, however.

One finding of interest in regards to age, however, was that the highest percentage of students in the “profound moral change” category (that is, 71%) **and** the highest percentage in the “profound religious change” category (that is, 66.7%) were in the middle age grouping (28-35 years). Again, while it is difficult to say precisely why this is so, it may be that students in this age range have become more willing to abandon or radically modify previous moral and religious frameworks than younger students, for example, because they have been exposed to life and its experiences longer, and on that basis are not only more aware of their options, but also more aware of what they don’t want. Again, further research is required to confirm these impressions.

The **lowest** percentage of students in the “profound moral change” **and** in the “profound religious change” categories, by way of comparison, were those in the older age range (36-42 years). This finding may be due to the fact that unlike the many of younger ones, older students may have already decided their moral and religious values, and might therefore be less willing at their age to make radical changes. In addition, given that some of these older students were married, they may have been even less willing to make radical changes out of respect (or pressure) from their partners.

The length of time spent in Australia attending university appeared to have little influence upon the moral and religious change experienced by the students in this study. Some students who had been studying for four or five years in Australia were just as firmly committed to their moral and religious values after that time as those who had been in the country only one or two years. And conversely, among those who experienced profound change, some had been here for only one year while others had been here five.

In regards to the role that a particular university location may have played in the changes experienced by the students in this study, there was no indication that one location was more (or less) influential than another. As previously discussed, however, it does appear that the students’ disciplinary focus played a role in the changes experienced by some. In general, courses of study in law and the social sciences appeared to be more influential in terms of precipitating change than courses in engineering or science.

Some other findings of this study

Several other findings of this study are worth mentioning at this point, because they provide a glimpse into the important - and yet relatively unresearched - area of the general intellectual effects of a Western University education on Muslim students. This study found that a Western university education stimulated and challenged the thinking of Muslim students in a number of important ways.

- 1) An increase in self-criticism was fostered through an acceptance of the positive elements of the new intellectual milieu.
- 2) Given the climate of ideas and the academic fare laid before them, many found university study a catalyst to increased faith, using their new intellectual skills to rethink their beliefs and to make adjustments (relatively minor) in interpretation and perspective. Only a few made major adjustments to the content of their Islamic worldview.
- 3) University education seemed to minimise areas of prejudice and intolerance in their minds. Students became more able to see other perspectives, and more tolerant of other traditions in most cases.
- 4) There appeared to be less space now in the minds of many students for ideology, as their courses of study gave them opportunities to consider alternative frameworks for interpretation. As a result, students often ascribed new meanings to situations.
- 5) Students became more rational, and developed a healthy rationalistic scrutiny. For many, this served to free the way for further empirical inquiry; for others it often occasioned a more pragmatic and instrumental treatment of this world.
- 6) Many became more open to use reason to affirm, challenge, and "balance" Islamic revelation. It also encouraged the rationalisation of theology, however, causing some to feel that reason was more important than revelation as a framework for understanding the world.
- 7) Students became more analytical, and more questioning, many expressing the desire to see more personal freedom, accountability, and pluralism in their own societies.
- 8) Many were encouraged to study Islam further as a result of facing difficult questions.

In sum, the Western university education received by this select group of Muslim students appeared to stimulate and influence their thinking in a variety of ways. This process was viewed positively by every student interviewed. While a few expressed minor frustration at the lack of prayer facilities or *halal* food, or the co-ed living conditions in some student

accommodation, there was little indication - contrary to the claims of some contemporary Islamic writers - that a Western syllabus creates Islamic militants. On the contrary, given that over 80% of the students sampled became more Islamic in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thinking during their time in the West, it would appear that Muslim students are not on the retreat from the intellectual challenges of the contemporary world, in most cases attempting to integrate their new ideas and perspectives.

As well as having their intellectual abilities stimulated and challenged in the various ways mentioned above, this study also found that the content and scope of the students' thinking changed in important ways as well. In general, students...

- became more global in their outlook and concerns.
- were more aware of the needs and aspirations of the international community, not just their own societies.
- had a much broader understanding of Western civilisation - its strengths and weaknesses.
- exhibited a strong desire to bring technology to bear on world problems.
- developed a strong desire to make the world a better place, with each worldview tradition contributing its strengths.
- recognised the commonality of human problems.
- displayed willingness, as Muslims, to contribute constructively to the resolution of global conflicts.

Implications

The findings of this study have some important implications for those currently pondering the nature of the relationship (if any) between cultural change (specifically moral ideas and values) and religious change, and also that between Westernisation and secularisation. First, this study has shown that there are various combinations of change possible (between culture and religion), and that change in one area does not mean that there will be corresponding change in the other. It would appear that among the Muslim students examined in this study, there is certainly no symbiotic relationship between religious change and culture change. Some of the factors influencing the degree to which students experience change in each of these areas have been presented in this study.

Second, this study has shown that, on an ideational level, Muslim students can/and do become "Westernised" after studying in the West, but that this does not mean that they *ipso facto* become "secularised". In fact, despite becoming more Western in terms of certain ideas and/or patterns of thinking, many students in this study became **more** Islamic (in terms of both ideas and practices). This is a surprising finding, given that in many academic circles to date (Western and Islamic), it is often assumed that to become Western is also to become more "secular" in terms of approach to religious practice, attitude, and/or understanding concerning the place of religion in contemporary society.

On the contrary, this study has shown that belief in Islam continues to remain strong among Muslim students in contemporary society, and is not on the decline in the face of rapid technological, scientific, and indeed educational advances. In addition, this study has shown that as new ideas were encountered and considered, Muslim students were able (more often than not) to incorporate them into their own Islamic worldview with (often) minor adjustments, and without experiencing a decrease in their religious ideas, and/or patterns of thinking.

CHAPTER NINE

FINDINGS, SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Given the proliferous claims by many contemporary writers concerning the "Westernisation" and "secularisation" of non-Western - and specifically Islamic - cultures, this thesis has attempted to identify, and begin mapping out some of the contours of an Islamic worldview in contemporary society. In broad terms this study sought to understand the cultural and religious implications of an educational experience in the West for Muslim university students. Its specific concern was first with the particular ways that the worldviews of Muslim university students may have been challenged or changed as a result of living and studying in the West, and second, with the extent to which Westernisation and secularisation are valid and appropriate frameworks for explaining the changes that occurred.

The first part of this thesis consisted of an examination of cultural change using Westernisation as the central analytic category. Sperber's definition of culture as ideas (or mental representations) was used in order to isolate and examine ideational change, and a worldview approach was utilised in order to focus specifically on changes to the moral ideas and values (axiology) of Muslim students.

In order to examine Westernisation on an empirical level, however, this study has shown that there are numerous theoretical, conceptual and methodological hurdles that must be addressed and overcome. The first involves distinguishing theoretically between the Westernisation of individuals, of groups, and of societies. Despite being used widely, and despite the regularity with which writers argue that such-and-such a culture has been "Westernised", providing a clear definition of the term for use in empirical research was found to be problematic. An exploration of some of the current definitions and uses of the term by contemporary writers illustrated that to date Westernisation has been used somewhat as a catchphrase to account for a broad range of cultural change, not only among individuals, but also groups and societies. This study focused specifically on Westernisation among Muslim individuals in order to begin identifying and mapping some of the characteristics of Westernisation on the personal or subjective level. There is a need

for further research, however, to examine some of the other levels upon which the Westernisation of the Islamic world is often said to be occurring.

A second hurdle involved distinguishing between the "ideational" aspects of personal Westernisation (that is, consciousness, patterns of thought, maps of meaning etcetera) from the "external" aspects (that is, behaviour, clothing, artefacts, etcetera). It seems clear that if Westernisation is to be of any use as a term for describing cultural change among non-Western cultures, researchers must distinguish conceptually (and methodologically) between these two aspects in order to be clear about what it is that is being examined. This study found that using a worldview approach to examine ideational change proved highly successful, helping to identify many subtle philosophical shifts in the worldviews of Muslim students, that using non-philosophical approaches to examining culture change might otherwise have overlooked.

And a third hurdle involved providing a working definition of Westernisation. This was accomplished by combining some of the key philosophical features of a Western mindset distilled from the writings of several prominent contemporary writers, together with some of the main contours of an Enlightenment worldview. One of the contributions of this thesis to the debate concerning Westernisation, then, has been to construct and operationalise a definition of Westernisation on an ideational level.

In sum, the three problems I have identified facing researchers interested in examining the Westernisation thesis are 1) Theoretical (the problems of definition), 2) Conceptual (the problem of focus), and 3) Methodological (the problem of scope). From this researcher's perspective, however, the problems of examining the Westernisation process are not insurmountable if one is able to define what Westernisation means for each area of inquiry where it is said to be (or said not to be) taking place, conceptually able to make a clear distinction between the Westernisation of individuals and the Westernisation of society, and methodologically able to distinguish between the external (behavioural) and ideational aspects of personal Westernisation. The approach of this study has taken all three into account.

Having worked through some of the theoretical, conceptual and methodological issues associated with examining the Westernisation thesis, the first part of this study then

proceeded to an analysis of the accounts by Muslim students of their experiences during their time at universities in the West. This study found that there were three main categories of response by students to the challenge of living and studying in a Western culture: students who experienced **no change** to their moral ideas and /or values, those who experienced **some change**, and those who experienced **profound change**. An examination of each of these categories - some of which could be broken down into further sub-categories - provided important insights into the different "maps of meaning", perspectives and views Muslim students developed during their experiences in the West, and some of the factors that contributed to them.

No moral change

This study has shown that forty-five students (56.3%) experienced no change to their moral ideas or values during their time at university in the West. This finding would indicate that these students had not become "Westernised" in any way during their time in Australia.

The general pattern of response by students in this group was to **reject** many of the moral ideas and values of the West. Many viewed the fundamental fault with Western civilisation as its ethical vacuum, expressing a disenchantment with the West, accompanied by an increasing conviction that Islam has the right ethical and spiritual values suitable to humankind's ultimate welfare. Others reacted strongly to the modern West, in order to preserve their own traditional ideas and values, and to emphasise their Islamic identity.

Some moral change

This study has shown that twenty-eight students (35%) experienced some moral change during their time at university in the West, many adopting a range of distinctly Western ideas values and perspectives. The general pattern of response by students in this category was to **assimilate**, wherever possible, those aspects of Western culture deemed beneficial and acceptable within the framework of their own Islamic traditions. While there were criticisms of excessive liberalism, with its disintegrative individualism, for example, most students enjoyed the increased personal freedom they had in the West, often coming to value freedom more than abstract moral universals. In addition, there was more willingness to allow for pluralism in terms of moral values and perspectives.

A tension was produced in some students, however, as they sought ways to adopt certain Western ideas and values and yet remain faithful to traditional Islamic perspectives. This often generated more introspection, as students questioned the meaning of their Islamic identity and heritage in the light of some of the new ideas and perspectives they were encountering. In addition, it fostered more cross-cultural comparison, as students identified - and struggled in some cases - with obvious gaps in their own culture. Some of the issues identified by these students were a) the need for more rights and freedom for Islamic women, b) more tolerance for the perspectives of other worldview traditions, c) more freedom to think outside the framework of religion, and d) more understanding of the West, its culture and ideas.

Profound moral change

This study has shown that seven students (8.7%) experienced profound change to their moral ideas and/or values since coming to the West to study. This indicates that these students had become very Western during their time in Australia. The general pattern of response by students in this group was to **accept** many of the moral ideas and values they encountered during their time in the West, albeit for various reasons. Several developed a more democratic orientation and behaviour, being impressed with pluralism in the West, and disillusioned with the autocratic and often coercive political justification and implementation of Islamic moral values in their own societies. Students in this category were also more inclined to adopt the values of individualism, equality and progress, (defined in Western terms) which contributed to a stronger "this-worldly" outlook. In addition, an increase in rationalisation led to attempts by some to reduce theology and ethics to a consistent rational system of ideas.

In summary, this study has shown that while the majority of students (56.3%) rejected the moral ideas and values of the West, and remained committed to their own Islamic ideals, for some (43.7%), their experiences in the West were a catalyst for a shift towards a range of distinctly Western moral ideas and values. One of the most important implications of this finding for the Westernisation thesis, given that a "Westernisation of the mind" was found to occur among Muslim students in the West, is that Westernisation continues to be a valid and useful framework for analysing and understanding some of the patterns of cultural change among Muslims in contemporary society.

The second part of this thesis consisted of an examination of **religious change** using secularisation as the central analytic category. Again, Sperber's definition of culture as ideas or mental representations was used in order to isolate and examine ideational change, and a worldview approach was utilised in order to focus on changes to the religious ideas of Muslim students.

In order to examine secularisation on an empirical level, however, this study has shown that for secularisation too, there are several important hurdles (theoretical, conceptual and methodological) that must be addressed and overcome. The first hurdle this study addressed was that of definition. An examination of the definitions and uses of the term by some contemporary writers revealed that many do not distinguish in their explanations between the secularisation of individuals, and the secularisation of society - as though they were both one and the same. The failure to break secularisation down into its various facets, and define and examine each one separately, appears to have resulted in the term becoming a catch phrase for any and every kind of "religious decline". In addition, secularisation was being used to explain a broad range of religious change in distinctly different areas of inquiry.

While the focus of this study was on secularisation among Muslim individuals, an important question raised by this thesis is whether the process of secularisation among individuals occurs in the same way, or to the same extent, as the process of secularisation in a given society, and if not, what criteria, then, should be used to examine secularisation in each? Further research is needed in this important area.

The second problem this researcher faced in an attempt to examine secularisation was that it "does not lend itself readily to definitive quantitative test" (Wallis and Bruce, 1992:8). This study has shown that there are at least two reasons - one conceptual the other methodological - for this problem. The first (conceptual) is that secularisation to date has usually been defined as a process of "religious decline", and it is necessary to define what "religious" means before we can then say whether something is less "religious" or not. An examination of some contemporary writers and their views on secularisation revealed that current definitions of secularisation are imprecise and confusing, largely because they are bound to/and dependent upon definitions of religion.

The second reason for the difficulty in examining personal secularisation is methodological; researchers often attempt to measure religious change **quantitatively**. The problem associated with attempting to measure something like "religious decline" quantitatively, is that criteria must be selected that lend themselves to quantification, such as number of times believers pray, or attend places of worship or ceremonies etc. Conclusions are then made as to whether "secularisation" is taking place based on the number of times individuals participate in these events. But what does this quantitative data really indicate? This study has shown that a decline in religious practices did not 'ipso facto' mean individuals were becoming less Islamic.

By adopting a philosophical (that is, worldview) approach, this study avoided a) the dilemma of defining and delineating what is "religious" from what is not, and b) the temptation to use quantitative data to make conclusions concerning qualitative change. This study focused instead on whether students were becoming more - or less - Islamic in terms of their worldview and consciousness, and then compared this qualitative data with the quantitative data of changes to religious practices. This approach proved successful, revealing many subtle philosophical shifts in the mindsets of Muslim students that an approach measuring "religious decline" may have overlooked, thereby providing a much more detailed and rich picture of Muslim experience in contemporary society.

In sum, the three problems I have identified facing researchers interested in examining the secularisation thesis are the problems of definition, scope, and methodology. From this researcher's perspective, however, the difficulties associated with examining the secularisation thesis are not insurmountable if one defines what the secularisation of individuals entails (as distinct from the secularisation of society), second, if one conceptually distinguishes between the two aspects of personal secularisation (the behavioural and ideational), and third, if one methodologically examines religious change both quantitatively and qualitatively. The approach of this study took all three into account.

Having identified and addressed some of the theoretical, conceptual and methodological issues associated with examining the secularisation thesis, part two of this thesis then proceeded to an analysis of the accounts by Muslim students of their experiences during their time at universities in the West. This study found that there were three main categories of response by students to the challenge of living and studying in a Western

culture: students who experienced **no change** to their Islamic ideas and/or patterns of thought, those who experienced **some change**, and those who experienced **profound change**. An examination of each of these categories - together with some of their sub-categories - provided important insights into the different "maps of meaning", perspectives and views Muslim students developed during their experiences in the West, and some of the factors that contributed to them.

No religious change

This study has shown that twenty-four students (30%) indicated that they had not changed any of their religious practices or ideas since coming to the West to study. This would indicate that these students did not become "secularised" in any way during their time in Australia. The general pattern of response by students in this category was to **avoid** change to their Islamic ideas and/or patterns of thought for several main reasons. First, given their perspective that Islam is a comprehensive worldview, and by definition, then, "the best", change was viewed as undesirable and unnecessary. Second, some viewed Western ideas and philosophies as a threat to Islam. And third, while accepting that Western technology and science would benefit the Islamic world, others believed either that the West had nothing to offer in terms of new ideas, or that any ideas they encountered here for the first time - despite being new to them - were most likely Islamic in any case, thereby claiming any/all truth as Islamic truth.

Some religious change.

This study has shown that forty-seven students (58.7%) experienced some change to their religious practices and/or ideas during their time in the West. Despite the fact that there were variations in the frequency and commitment to religious practices (that is, some going to the mosque or praying less, some the same, and some more than before), in general, students in this category became **more Islamic** in terms of their ideas and or patterns of thinking in various ways during their time in the West. This would indicate that in terms of ideas and/or patterns of thinking, these students did not become secularised during their time in the West.

The general response of students in this group was to **re-assess** their religious ideas, values and patterns of thinking, and in many cases commit themselves to their own Islamic

worldview in a greater way than before. This study showed that, among others, some of the ways students in this category became more Islamic were a) they became increasingly convinced of the importance of religion in their lives, b) they developed a greater desire to study Islam and become more knowledgeable about it, and c) they became more convinced of a spiritual dimension to life, and as a result, more desirous to seek after God, d) they became more convinced that religious values are important in order to build a better society, and e) they developed a burden to see the Islamic world become great once again.

Profound religious change

This study has shown that nine students (11.3%) experienced profound change to their religious practices and/or ideas during their time in the West. Despite the fact that some of the students in this category practised their religion **more** after coming to the West than they did before, in several important ways they became **less Islamic** in terms of their thinking and/or patterns of thought. The general pattern of response by students in this group, then, was to **replace** some of their Islamic ideas and/or perspectives with Western ones, indicating they had become "secularised" during their time in the West.

Some of the ways that students in this category became less Islamic in terms of their thinking were that, a) one no longer viewed Islam as a comprehensive worldview with principles for every area of life, but began to view religion as just a matter of personal preference, b) several became open to new religious perspectives, one adopting the idea that all religions teach much the same thing, and that all religions worship the same God, c) several became increasingly critical of some Islamic religious practices, and developed an empathy for other religious worldviews, and d) one rejected Islam as a worldview capable of contributing to the development of a modern society.

In summary, then, this study has shown that 30% of the students overall experienced no change to their religious practices or ideas during their time in the West. This finding would indicate these students did not become "secularised" in any way. A further 58.7% experienced some change to their religious practices, some practising their religion less than before coming to Australia, some the same, and some more than before. Interestingly, however, all of the students in this second group either remained the same, or become more Islamic in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought since arriving in Australia.

This too would indicate that, like the first group, these students did not become "secularised" in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought during their time in the West. And a final 11.3% of the students experienced profound change to their religious ideas and/or patterns of thought, moving away from an Islamic perspective in several important ways. This finding would indicate that these particular students had indeed become "secularised" during their time in Australia.

Given, then, that 30% of the students interviewed did not change any of their religious practices or ideas since coming to the West, and a further 58.7% either remained the same or became **more** Islamic in terms of their ideas and/or patterns of thought for a total of 88.7%, it would appear that in general, the secularisation thesis does **not** hold as an explanation of the religious experiences of this select group of Muslim university students who have come to the West to study.

Some of the implications of these findings for the secularisation thesis were then discussed. One of the most important was the need to expand the current understanding of "secularisation" to include changes that can occur to the religious ideas, and/or patterns of thought of an individual - an area of inquiry important enough (this researcher would argue) to be examined separately from religious practices. Given the finding of this study that religious change can occur on two levels (that is, a) practice and b) ideas and/or patterns of thought) and that there was no direct or necessary correlation between a decline in religious practices and a decline in religious consciousness, an important issue has been raised concerning the way the secularisation thesis has been utilised to date as a framework for explaining religious change, and especially religious "decline" in contemporary society. This study has shown that the secularisation thesis requires further refinement if it is to be used as a framework for explaining both ideational change and changes to the religious practices of Muslim university students in the West.

Having examined the moral experiences of Muslim students in chapter five, and their religious experiences in chapter seven, this thesis then proceeded in chapter eight to examine and compare the nature and extent of moral change with that of religious change. This study has shown that there appeared to be no direct or obvious correlation between cultural change and religious change, and that changes to both culture and religion can occur in a variety of ways and in numerous combinations. Two of these combinations (No

moral change / No religious change; Profound moral change / Profound religious change) were then examined, with a discussion of some of the factors that appeared to contribute to the experiences of students in these particular categories.

Some of the factors that appeared to contribute to the experiences of students who reported **no change** to **either** their moral or religious ideas, were that they a) had already decided the values they would live by, and so were not open to change, b) were married and had children with them, providing a family context that limited the kinds of social and cultural activities they could participate in, c) had lived in the West before, so there was nothing new in Australia that might induce change, d) had strong family ties and values - which included moral accountability to each other and the concept of maintaining family honour and a good name, e) made a commitment to themselves before coming that they would be good Muslims in the West, and that this was viewed as success in life, f) wanted to set an example for non-Muslim family back home, g) felt the opportunity to study in Australia was entrusted to them directly by Allah, and so were motivated by theological perspectives, h) were single-minded, and had come to the West to get a degree, not in order to experience a new cultural and religious context.

Some of the factors considered by this researcher to be the most influential in contributing to the experiences of students who reported change to **both** their moral **and** religious ideas were that they a) were dissatisfied with the state of Islam in their own society, b) viewed Western values and ideas positively before coming, c) encountered alternative perspectives and paradigms for nation building, d) had a minimal understanding and commitment to Islam, d) resented the perceived corrupt political situation back home, and e) felt free at last to sample aspects of a Western lifestyle and escape – albeit temporarily – from the political, social and religious constraints imposed on individuals in a communist state.

Some other findings of this study were then presented concerning the ways that a Western university education appeared to stimulate and challenge the thinking of Muslim students. This study showed, for example, that for many, university study was a catalyst to increased faith, and that they had used their new intellectual skills to rethink their beliefs and to make adjustments in interpretation and perspective. Many students also said that they were now able to view situations from other perspectives, and as a result were more tolerant of other

traditions. And others reported that they had become more rational, and were now much more open to using reason to affirm, challenge, and "balance" Islamic revelation than before.

This study also showed that the **content** and **scope** of the students' thinking changed in important ways as well. Some of the most important changes were that students a) became more global in their outlook and concerns, b) were more aware of the needs and aspirations of the international community, c) better understood Western civilisation now - its strengths and weaknesses, and d) had a strong desire to make the world a better place

Chapter eight then concluded with a brief discussion of some of the implications of this study for the Westernisation and secularisation theses. An important finding of this study was that the relationship between cultural change and religious change on an ideational level was not a symbiotic one, nor did Westernisation (on an ideational level) necessarily mean Muslims were "secularised" at all. In fact, as this study has shown, many of the students became more Islamic in terms of their religious ideas, despite living in a Western social context, and being attracted to various Western ideas and values. This finding challenges the claims of some contemporary writers - Western and Islamic - who argue that a) there is a causal relationship between Westernisation and secularisation, b) a Western university education causes the "secularisation" of Muslim students.

Implications of this study

This study raises some important questions for Muslim students in contemporary society and for the Islamic world in general. As students accounted for their lives and experiences in the modern (if not postmodern) West, many of the salient themes and patterns that emerged highlight some of the broader issues Muslims continue to face in the contemporary world, and foreshadow, in many ways, some of the responses to them currently being incubated - at least by Muslim university students in the West.

One question concerns the fate of Islamic tradition in the face of rapid scientific, technological and economic developments on a global scale. Other religious traditions too face the same agonising question - how to conserve tradition and at the same time add the scientific, technological and economic aspects of modernity deemed appropriate to that tradition. Muslims appear destined to continue struggling with this tension in the future, it

seems - a tension exacerbated by the general orientation of their tradition towards prioritising the community's welfare and interests over that of the individual. Whether it is possible to have tradition - and modern technology - without what some students viewed as "corrosive individualism", remains to be seen, and is an important area for further research.

Another question raised by this study concerns the quest for spiritual values in the midst of increasing materialism and the pursuit of individual happiness. As some students tried conceptually and attitudinally to bridge the gap between material modernisation and spiritual values, they were confronted with the challenge of harmonising one of the effects of Western education and science and technology - a more pragmatic and rational orientation - with their own Islamic perspectives on the place and importance of reason in religious experience. While this study found no clash between Western science and traditional religious experience among these Muslim students, an important area for further research concerns the extent to which materialism, and science and technology challenge the values and ideas of the various other religious traditions.

A third question raised by this study concerns the extent to which a Western university education poses challenges to and/or "subverts" Islamic culture on a general scale. The results of this study show that while Muslims can, and do resist such subversion, important intellectual shifts occur which are not entirely negative, and which indicate that the assimilation of ideas and patterns of thought from sources outside of Islam itself is a healthy, if not necessary process. Of course, what has not been adequately assessed is the impact of other factors to determine the particular influence of courses, degree programs and particular universities, and whether the change experienced by these students is permanent, or whether they will conform to previous ideas and/or patterns of thought when they return home. An important area for further research, then, would be a longitudinal study to determine the ways their newly acquired ideas become operative in their own cultural contexts.

Towards the Future

One of the questions raised at the beginning of this thesis was whether it can be said that a "transition to a global consciousness" is occurring in contemporary society as a result of the increase in intercultural exchange, technology, international media, and the flow of

ideas (eg. human rights, democracy) and patterns of thinking (eg. environmental concerns) across national and cultural boundaries. While this thesis did not specifically attempt to address this question, along the way some insights have been gleaned from the study of the "mental geography" (Smart, 1983:2) of Muslim university students which suggest that some of the cultural and religious processes affecting the Islamic world today - such as Westernisation and secularisation - are precipitating ideational change in a number of important ways. Some of those ways include recognising the commonality of human problems, exhibiting a strong desire to bring technology to bear on world problems, intending to make the world a better place through the contributions of the various worldview traditions, and displaying a willingness, as Muslims, to contribute constructively to the resolution of global conflicts.

While it may be too early yet to draw conclusions concerning the meaning, reach and influence of some of these patterns of thinking, two things seem certain: first, that ideas of global significance such as these are being diffused throughout Islamic (if not indeed all) cultures and societies at an increasing rate today, bringing change to the worldviews of individuals where they take root, and second, that religious experience is likely to remain an important part of culture and life in the Islamic world, generating its own special ways of viewing and understanding the world in which we all live.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW LIST

(Sample A)

1) Male	Indonesia	PhD
2) Male	Pakistan	Masters
3) Female	Indonesia	PhD
4) Male	Mauritius	Undergraduate
5) Male	Malaysia	Undergraduate
6) Male	Kuwait	Masters
7) Male	Ghana	Masters
8) Male	Libya	PhD
9) Male	Pakistan	PhD
10) Male	Sri Lanka	Undergraduate
11) Male	Pakistan	Undergraduate
12) Male	Pakistan	Masters
13) Male	Maldives	Masters
14) Male	Malaysia	Undergraduate
15) Male	Indonesia	PhD
16) Female	Pakistan	PhD
17) Male	Indonesia	Masters
18) Female	Indonesia	Masters
19) Female	Indonesia	Undergraduate
20) Male	Iran	PhD
21) Male	India	PhD
22) Female	Indonesia	PhD
23) Male	Iran	PhD
24) Male	Bangladesh	PhD
25) Female	Pakistan	Masters
26) Male	Iran	PhD
27) Female	Bangladesh	Masters
28) Male	Iran	PhD
29) Male	Indonesia	PhD
30) Female	Bangladesh	PhD
31) Female	Bangladesh	Masters
32) Female	Bangladesh	Masters
33) Female	Bosnia	PhD
34) Male	Bangladesh	PhD
35) Male	Libya	PhD
36) Female	Bangladesh	PhD
37) Male	Bangladesh	PhD
38) Male	Bangladesh	PhD
39) Female	Bangladesh	PhD
40) Female	Indonesia	PhD

BY GENDER

Males	26
Females	14

BY NATIONALITY

1) Pakistan	6
2) Indonesia	9
3) Malaysia	2
4) Kuwait	1
5) Libya	2
6) Ghana	1
7) Maldives	1
8) Mauritius	1
9) Sri Lanka	1
10) Iran	4
11) India	1
12) Bangladesh	10
13) Bosnia	1
Total	40

BY DEGREE

1) Undergraduate	6
2) Masters	11
3) PhD	23

APPENDIX B

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

(Sample B)

1) Male	Indonesia	Undergraduate
2) Male	Indonesia	Undergraduate
3) Male	Malaysia	Undergraduate
4) Male	Pakistan	Masters
5) Male	Bangladesh	PhD
6) Male	Pakistan	Masters
7) Male	Indonesia	Masters
9) Male	Pakistan	PhD
10) Female	Indonesia	Undergraduate
11) Female	Indonesia	Undergraduate
12) Male	Pakistan	Undergraduate
13) Male	Indonesia	Masters
14) Male	China	Masters
15) Male	Indonesia	Masters
16) Male	Pakistan	Undergraduate
17) Male	Pakistan	Masters
18) Male	Maldives	PhD
19) Female	Malaysia	PhD
20) Male	Malaysia	PhD
21) Male	Indonesia	Undergraduate
22) Female	Indonesia	Undergraduate
23) Male	Indonesia	PhD
24) Male	Pakistan	PhD
25) Male	Pakistan	Masters
26) Female	Malaysia	PhD
27) Male	Pakistan	Masters
28) Male	India	Undergraduate
29) Male	Pakistan	Masters
30) Male	Pakistan	Masters
31) Male	Pakistan	Masters
32) Male	Pakistan	Undergraduate
33) Male	Bangladesh	Undergraduate
34) Male	Pakistan	Undergraduate
35) Male	Saudi Arabia	Undergraduate
36) Male	Saudi Arabia	Masters
37) Male	Pakistan	PhD
38) Female	Indonesia	Masters
39) Male	Pakistan	Masters
40) Female	Indonesia	Undergraduate

BY GENDER

Males	33
Females	7

BY NATIONALITY

1) Pakistan	16
2) Maldives	1
3) Indonesia	12
4) Malaysia	4
5) China	1
6) Iran	1
7) Bangladesh	2
8) Saudi Arabia	2
9) India	1
Total	40

BY DEGREE

1) Undergraduate	15
2) Masters	15
3) PhD	10

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Demographic Information

Male/female.

What is your age?

What is your nationality?

Ethnic group?

How long have you been in Australia?

Which university are you attending?

What course are you taking at university? Which year of study are you in?

General Background

Is this the first time you have spent any time outside your country?

Have you lived anywhere else in the West? Where? How long?

What was your reason for coming to the West to study?

Did you have any expectations?

What are the benefits of studying in the West?

What are the disadvantages of studying here?

Management of everyday life

Please describe what you do in a typical - day - week.

Which newspapers do you read?

Which TV shows do you watch? Which radio programs do you listen to?

Do you have a part time job? Do you like it?

Do you live alone? With family? Which family members?

Are you having any difficulties here? (economic? family?)

Are you having any personal conflicts here?

Are you being harassed in any way?

Experiences in the West

What was the most enjoyable experience you have had so far in this country?

What was your most difficult experience?

What is the funniest thing that has happened so far?

How do you find Australian humour?

What is the most frustrating thing that has happened so far?

What do you like most about the west?

What do you like least about the West?

Would you like to live permanently in the West?

What would be the thing you would be most concerned about?

What would you most like to change about the West?

Do you think the West is anti-Islamic?

University experience

Have you changed as a result of your studies? How?

Do you participate in any clubs, or societies on campus?

Do you participate in any extra-curricular activities or sports teams?
What do you like about your course?
What is the most important thing you have learned at university?
What idea (that is, philosophy, person, book, or concept) has made the biggest impact on you?
Would you tell your Muslim friends back home to come here to study? Why/Why not?
Do you think that Western university education makes Muslim students more skeptical of their Islamic faith?
Do you think that Western university education can cause Muslims to become "fundamentalists".
If you could make changes to your university course to make it more Islamic, what would you do?
What will you do after university?
Has this goal changed since you've been here?

Moral values

Do you go out socially with members of the opposite sex here? How often?
Did you do this back home in your country?
Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend here?
Do you go to the movies here? Which ones?
How often do you hire videos?
Do you go to clubs, discos?
Do you drink alcohol?
Are you freer to do what you want here or in your home country?
How do you feel about that?
Have you changed your attitudes towards the opposite sex?
Do you think that you have changed your moral values since being here? Why/why not?

Ideas about Islam

In what ways has your Islamic faith helped you since being here at university?
Are your opinions about the Islamic faith being challenged in any way by what you are learning?
Are your friends influencing your beliefs?
Since coming here, have you changed any of your opinions about any aspect of the Islamic faith?

Images/Perceptions about Westernisation

Some Muslims think that their countries are becoming Westernised. Is this true?
What does "Westernisation" mean to you?
Do you think that you are becoming Westernised here?
Do you know of any Muslim students here who have become Westernised?
How have they changed?

Secularisation

Some scholars think that religion is becoming less and less important in today's modern world?
Do you agree?
Do you think religion is an important part of Australian society?
Is your university course "secular", in your opinion?

Resurgence/Revitalisation

How would you describe what some Muslims are calling the revitalisation of Islam in Muslim societies today?

Is it happening in your country? Why?

APPENDIX D

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

A) Demographic Information

1. Are you an overseas student (ie. you have come to Australia to study)?
Yes _____ No _____
2. What is your gender?
a) Male _____
b) Female _____
3. What is your age? _____
4. What is your nationality? _____
5. Do you identify yourself as being from a particular ethnic group? Which ethnic group?
(eg. Javanese, Lebanese, Han Chinese)

6. Are you married or single? _____
7. Do you have other family with you here in Australia?
(eg. wife, children) _____
8. How long have you been in Australia? _____
9. Which university are you attending? _____
10. Which degree/course are you doing? (eg. Undergraduate, Masters, PhD)

11. What year of your course are you in? (1st, 2nd ,etc.) _____

B) General Background

12. Is this the first time you have lived in a Western country?
Yes _____ No _____
13. Which other Western countries have you visited or lived in?

14. What was your main reason for coming to Australia to study?

15. Do you think there are any ADVANTAGES in coming to the West to study?

16. Are there any DISADVANTAGES in studying in the West?

C) Management of Everyday Life

17. The following are some everyday life PROBLEMS, or DIFFICULTIES that students might experience during their time overseas. If you are having PROBLEMS in any of the following areas, please put a NUMBER from 1 to 5 next to those items according to the following scale.

(Scale)

Very MINOR problem	1
	2
A MODERATE problem	3
	4
VERY BIG problem	5

Please NUMBER each item from 0-3

Items:

- a) Health problems? _____
- b) Loneliness? _____
- c) No close Muslim friends? _____
- d) Negative influence of Western friends? _____
- e) Being controlled by your parents' wishes? _____
- f) Poor relationships with university or supervisor? _____
- g) Religious persecution _____
- h) Doubts about the Islamic religion? _____
- i) Influence of Western culture? _____
- j) Racist remarks made against you? _____
- k) No time to pray _____

D) Ideas About Islam

18. How important is the Islamic religion in your life?

(Scale)

VERY important	1
Moderately Important	2
Not sure	3
Somewhat Important	4
NOT Important	5

Please number each item from 1-5

Items:

- a) BEFORE coming here _____
b) NOW _____

19. Since being in Australia, what is your ATTITUDE toward the Islamic religion? Please CIRCLE the best answer.

MORE committed now-----no change-----LESS committed NOW

20. Are you more active in PRACTISING your Islamic religion here or at home? Please CIRCLE the best answer.

MORE active here-----no change-----LESS active here

21. How INFLUENTIAL have each of the following been in your decision to follow the Islamic religion? Please number each item below from 1-5 according to the following scale.

(Scale)

NOT an influence at all	1
MINOR influence	2
DON'T know	3
MODERATE influence	4
MAJOR influence	5

Please NUMBER each item from 1-5

Items:

- a) Parents _____
b) Family _____
c) Your country _____
d) Your culture _____
e) Personal studies _____
f) Islamic school _____
g) Muslim friends _____
h) Personal conviction _____

22. Since being in Australia, have you CHANGED any of your opinions about the Islamic religion? Please number each item below according to the following scale.

(Scale)

VERY sure	1
MODERATELY sure	2

- No Change 3
- NOT So sure 4
- NOT sure at all 5

Please NUMBER each item from 1 - 5

	BEFORE	NOW
a) Islam has an answer for every problem in life.	_____	_____
b) All governments would be better if they were Islamic.	_____	_____
c) Muslims should be involved in political activities.	_____	_____
d) Religious leaders (ie., the Mullah, Imam etcetera) should always be obeyed.	_____	_____
e) The Koran is the final authority in all things.	_____	_____
f) Islamic law (Shar'ia) should be implemented in all Muslim countries.	_____	_____
g) The best form of government is to have an Islamic state.	_____	_____
h) Islam is in conflict with the Theory of Evolution.	_____	_____

E) Experiences in the West

23. Please indicate HOW YOU FEEL about the following ideas by placing a NUMBER from 1-5 next to EACH item.

(Scale)

- STRONGLY agree 1
- MODERATELY agree 2
- Don't know 3
- MODERATELY disagree 4
- STRONGLY disagree 5

Please NUMBER each item from 1 - 5

Items:

a) I am enjoying my time living here in the West.	_____
b) I would like to live in Australia permanently.	_____
c) If I could live permanently here, I would be concerned about the Western cultural influences upon my children.	_____
d) It is harder to be a good Muslim here than back in my own country.	_____
e) There are more temptations for me here than there were back in my home country.	_____
f) Materialism is the main philosophy of the West.	_____
g) It is not easy to make many Western friends here.	_____
h) I feel people here are prejudiced against Muslims.	_____
i) I feel very self-conscious here about being a Muslim.	_____
j) I feel proud of being a Muslim here.	_____

F) University Experience

24. How would you describe your EXPERIENCE of studying at university here? Please CIRCLE the phrase that best describes how you feel.

Very negative Somewhat negative Neutral Somewhat positive Very positive

25. As a Muslim, has the university been helpful to you? Please CIRCLE the phrase that best describes how you feel.

Very helpful Somewhat helpful Neutral Not that helpful Not helpful at all

26. In your university experience so far, is there an IDEA (or philosophy) that you feel has influenced you here?

27. Has your university experience given you a more positive IMAGE of the West, a more negative one, or there has been no change? Please CIRCLE the best answer.

More NEGATIVE No change More POSITIVE

28. Have you CHANGED any of your IDEAS since being in Australia? In order to indicate HOW you have changed, please place a number from 1-5 next to each statement indicating what you thought BEFORE you came, and what you think NOW.

(Scale)
 STRONGLY agree 1
 MODERATELY agree 2
 Don't know 3
 MODERATELY disagree 4
 STRONGLY disagree 5

Please number each item from 1-5

	BEFORE	NOW
MARRIAGE		
a) Homosexual marriage (i.e., between individuals of the same sex) is OK.	_____	_____
b) Marriage isn't for everyone; its OK to just live together, if you want.	_____	_____
c) Marriage is for life	_____	_____
d) Divorce is OK if you don't get along.	_____	_____

ROLE OF WOMEN

- e) A woman's main role in life is to have children. _____
- f) A woman should stay at home, rather than have a career. _____
- g) Women should be allowed to get the same jobs as men. _____
- h) Women should be equal in authority with men. _____

WOMEN IN SOCIETY

- i) Western women have too much freedom. _____
- j) Muslim women need more freedom. _____
- k) Muslim women in the West have more freedom than Muslim women in Islamic countries. _____

FAMILY

- l) The man is the head of the family. _____
- m) The man should be the main financial provider in the family. _____
- n) Once children reach 18 years of age, they should be free to do what they want. _____
- o) Children should never be spanked. _____
- p) A daughter should have to get her parent's permission to marry someone. _____

VALUES

- q) The most important thing in life is to get a good paying job. _____
- r) Abortion is OK if the mother doesn't want the baby. _____
- s) Mercy killing (ie. active euthanasia) is OK if the person wants to die. _____
- t) People should have the right to view pornographic videos if they want. _____
- u) Drugs (eg. marijuana, heroin) should be legalized. _____
- v) Sex before marriage is OK if the couple are in love. _____
- w) I strictly follow Islamic moral values. _____

29. How IMPORTANT were the following to you, a) BEFORE you came to Australia, and b) NOW.

(Scale)

- VERY important 1
- MODERATLEY important 2
- Not sure 3
- NOT so important 4
- NOT important AT ALL 5

Please NUMBER item from 1 - 5

	BEFORE	NOW
Items:		
a) Having enough money to buy whatever you want.	_____	_____
b) Promoting political change in your country.	_____	_____
c) Having the freedom to do what you want.	_____	_____
d) Being able to make your own decisions without consulting your family	_____	_____
e) Preserving the environment.	_____	_____
f) Having Western friends.	_____	_____
g) Maintaining your Islamic identity/culture.	_____	_____
h) Being a good Muslim.	_____	_____

30. Please answer TRUE(T) or FALSE(F) next to each statement.

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a) I have more freedom in Australia to do what I want than I had back home. | _____ |
| b) The West emphasizes freedom too much. | _____ |
| c) I think its OK for a single Muslim student to have a Western boyfriend/girlfriend. | _____ |
| d) I think Muslim societies are too restrictive about alcohol. | _____ |
| e) Islamic moral values are superior to Western moral values. | _____ |

G) Moral Values

31. In terms of your Islamic moral values, please indicate whether each item has had a POSITIVE or NEGATIVE influence upon you while you have been here in Australia?
(Scale)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| VERY POSITIVE influence | 1 |
| SOMEWHAT positive influence | 2 |
| NO influence at all | 3 |
| SOMEWHAT negative influence | 4 |
| VERY NEGATIVE influence | 5 |

Please NUMBER each item from 1 - 5

Items:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| a) Western friends | _____ |
| b) Australian culture/society | _____ |
| c) Newspapers | _____ |
| d) TV shows | _____ |
| e) University studies | _____ |
| f) Other Muslim friends | _____ |

H) Islam and the West

32. Please indicate your opinions concerning the RELATIONSHIP between the Islamic world and the West.

(Scale)

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| STRONGLY agree | 1 |
| MODERATELY agree | 2 |
| Don't Know | 3 |
| MODERATELY disagree | 4 |
| STRONGLY disagree | 5 |

Please NUMBER each item from 1 - 5

Items:

- a) The Islamic world is in conflict with the West. _____
- b) In your country many problems are caused by Western economic/political influence. _____
- c) The Western world's values are a threat to Islamic societies. _____
- d) Many Western people think Muslims are terrorists. _____
- e) The Western world is Christian. _____
- f) The Western media often communicate a wrong image of Islam. _____
- g) Western political ideas would benefit the Muslim world. _____
- h) Muslims have a lot they can learn from the West. _____
- i) Many Muslims have a wrong view of the West. _____
- j) The West is not anti-Islamic. _____

33. What do you think the attitude of the Australian government towards Islam is?
Please CIRCLE the best answer.

Very negative	Partly negative	Neutral	Partly positive	Very positive
---------------	-----------------	---------	-----------------	---------------

34. Where did you get your IDEAS/OPINIONS of the WEST? Please indicate (next to each item) how INFLUENTIAL the following have been in developing your perceptions of the West?

(Scale)

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| VERY influential | 1 |
| MODERATELY influential | 2 |
| Don't know | 3 |
| SLIGHTLY influential | 4 |
| NOT influential AT ALL | 5 |

Please NUMBER each item from 1 - 5

Items:

- a) Islamic religious leaders _____
- b) TV (back home) _____
- c) TV (in Australia) _____
- d) Newspapers (back home) _____
- e) Newspapers (in Australia) _____
- f) Friends _____
- g) Family _____
- h) University studies _____
- i) Personal experience in Australia _____

D) Westernisation

35. Some writers say that the Islamic world is becoming more Western. Do you think that YOUR COUNTRY is becoming Westernised? Please place a number next to each item.

(Scale)

- NOT AT ALL becoming Westernised 1
- Becoming A LITTLE Westernised 2
- Don't know 3
- Becoming MODERATELY Westernised 4
- Becoming VERY Westernised 5

Items:

- a) Politics _____
- b) Economics _____
- c) Education _____
- d) Media _____
- e) Arts _____
- f) Laws-Moral values _____
- g) Family Structure _____

36. Westernisation can mean different things to different people. Please indicate YOUR IDEAS concerning the following statements by placing a number next to each item.

(Scale)

- STRONGLY agree 1
- MODERATELY agree 2
- Don't Know 3
- MODERATELY disagree 4
- STRONGLY disagree 5

Please NUMBER each item from 1 - 5

Items:

- a) The Islamic world in general is being Westernised. _____
- b) Muslim students often become Westernised after studying at a university in the West. _____
- c) Muslims who become Westernised will lose their Islamic moral values. _____
- d) The Islamic world needs weestern technology. _____
- e) Westernisation (in terms of the MIND) is necessary in order to develop more critical reasoning. _____
- f) Western economic ideas can benefit Islamic countries. _____
- g) Western values are a negative influence coming into Islamic countries through the media/TV. _____
- h) Western TV programs should be restricted in Muslim countries. _____
- i) There is too much Western culture in your country. _____

37. In your opinion, what is the FIRST THING that indicates a person (or nation) is becoming "Westernised"?

J) Secularisation

(Some writers define "secularisation" as a SOCIAL PROCESS where religion plays a decreasing role in day-to-day life).

38. How do you feel about the process of "Secularisation"? Do you see it as a POSITIVE or NEGATIVE process? Please WRITE your answer below.

39. Do you think that Australia is a SECULAR country?
(Scale)

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| NOT secular at all | 1 |
| SOMEWHAT secular | 2 |
| Don't Know | 3 |
| MODERATLEY secular | 4 |
| VERY secular | 5 |

Please number each item from 1-5

Items:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------|
| a) Laws | _____ |
| b) Government | _____ |
| c) Education System | _____ |
| d) Media | _____ |

40. Is the university education you are getting a SECULAR one?

Please number each item from 1-5

- | | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Courses (curriculum) | _____ |
| Lecturers | _____ |

41. Some Muslims feel that their country is becoming more "secularised". Is this happening in your country?

(Scale)

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Becoming MORE secular | 1 |
| Don't know | 2 |
| Becoming LESS secular | 3 |

Please NUMBER each item from 1-5

Items:

- a) Politics _____
- b) Economics _____
- c) Education _____
- d) Laws _____
- e) Media _____

42. Is the West RESPONSIBLE in any way for the "secularisation" of your country? Please CIRCLE the best answer below.

The West is _____ Don't Know _____ The West is not responsible. responsible.

K) Opinions about the World

43. The following are some statements concerning world events and issues. What are your ideas concerning these things? Please place a number next to each item.

(Scale)

- STRONGLY agree 1
- MODERATELY agree 2
- Don't Know 3
- MODERATELY disagree 4
- STRONGLY disagree 5

Please NUMBER each item from 1-5

Items:

- a) The West often portrays Muslims as "fundamentalists". _____
- b) Rationalism (an emphasis on the self-sufficiency of the human mind) is a negative Western philosophy. _____
- c) It was not good that the Saudis helped the USA in the war against Saddam Hussein. _____
- d) The West should have helped the Bosnian Muslims in the war against the Serbs. _____
- e) The Islamic world should become more modernised technologically. _____
- f) Modernisation often means the same thing as Westernisation. _____

L) Overall Experience of the West

44. In general, what was your IMPRESSION/ATTITUDE towards the West a) BEFORE, and b) AFTER you came?

(Scale)

- VERY negative 1
- SOMEWHAT negative 2
- Neutral 3

SOMEWHAT positive 4
VERY positive 5
Please NUMBER each item from 1-5

Items:

- a) BEFORE you came to Australia _____
- b) AFTER you came to Australia _____

45. And finally, please COMMENT on what you think is the central defining issue of what it means for a person to become "Westernised".

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY

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