

Paper 5

Pluralising Islam: doing Muslim identities differently

Máiréad Dunne, Naureen Durrani, Kathleen Fincham and Barbara Crossouard

Abstract

This paper challenges the stereotypical homogenisation of Islam often circulated in global discourses. We do this by focusing on the different ways youth across our four national case studies constructed their religious identities. The analysis we present is informed by our understanding that local, national and global discourses are significant to the interpellation of subjects and the production of identities. These are on-going processes that emerge within specific and particular national histories to produce plurality and diversity within and across contexts. We begin by highlighting the commonalities in youth's representations of Islam. These included proclamations of values such as universal peace and harmony as intrinsic to Islam and the global Ummah. The ways that these discourses of religion were sutured together with those of national belonging led us to explore the different socio-historical conjunctures of their respective postcolonial nations. This connection of the local with the national illuminated plurality as the historical and political contours in each nation produced different internal / external others against whom Muslim youth identity narratives were established and re-iterated. Finally, we turn to consider the intersections of these diverse identity narratives with global discursive flows around Islam and the responses these provoked for Muslim youth participants. In this multi-layered exploration of the complex intersections of religion with other identity narratives within four distinct historic and political contexts, we have illuminated the multiplicities and hybridities of youth's religious identities within and across the cases. Through this discussion, we challenge stereotypical tropes evident in the contemporary circulation of global discourses, which too often conflate all professions of Islamic faith with religious fundamentalism.

Key words: Islam; hybridity; religion; youth identities; global flows; postcoloniality

Word count: 7839

Introduction

In this paper we examine the identity practices of Muslim youth across four case studies. These are Lebanon, Pakistan, Nigeria and Senegal. We explore what being a Muslim means for young people

within the different social and historical contexts of their experience in each nation. Our focus is on the complexities of the constitution of youths' religious identities beneath the universalising label of Islam, as commonly understood in many parts of the west. In the discussion that follows, we illustrate the multiple interpretations and hybridities of Islam within and across the four different nations highlighting the histories and relational social dynamics within which Islam is practiced. Our attention here is drawn to the ways that young people in different national contexts position themselves within complex discursive tropes in the articulation and performance of their Muslim identities.

We begin with a brief reference to the theoretical positioning that frames our analysis in this paper. This is followed by an overview of the research methodology. Both these first short sections are common to other papers within this special issue and they are more fully elaborated in the introductory paper (Paper 1 in this special issue). Using comparative analysis, here we set out how different forms of Islam are articulated by youth in the different country contexts and trace how religion is entangled within the particular histories of their respective nations. We highlight the similarities across Muslim youth narratives of religion and then turn to the hybridities and multiplicities produced in reference to the formation of their post-colonial nation states. This leads us to consider the youth perspectives on the ways that practices of Islam intersect with traditional cultures. Syncretic forms of religious practice emerge and stabilise as the dynamics of local social relations and Islam accommodate each other (Marsden, 2008). Within these local cultural infusions, symbols of the 'good' Muslim are constructed and these give rise to a plurality of practice influenced by the particulars of place and space. Finally, we turn to wider geo-political relations and pressures bearing on each context in different ways, to illustrate how these further both shape and pluralise Islam. While acknowledging similarities, overall our analysis resists the homogenisation of Islam and points to the relational particularities of space and place as critical to understandings of being a Muslim and the professing of faith in different contexts.

Theoretical framing

In recent decades, the expression of Islamophobia in the west has tended to construct a singular Muslim subject and to connect Islamic faith with religious fundamentalism and terrorism (Asad, 2003; Mamdani, 2004; Mahmood, 2009). As we illustrate below many youth participants were well aware of this positioning. Mamdani (2004) however points to misunderstandings of jihad and distinguishes between the 'greater jihad' which is inward facing work on the self and to the 'lesser jihad' which is more outward facing and defensive. Again within the latter, he contrasts the universalising 'state-centered' jihad of radical Islam, with what he describes a 'society-centered' jihad that while it resists

Western culture and philosophy, offers an Islamic road to modernity. It embraces the pursuit of knowledge, seeks social reform and holds onto the possibility of on-going contextually sensitive reinterpretation of shari'a law. This distinction opens space for an exploration of differences in Islam and highlights the importance of context. This points to the significance of local histories and global social relations in the interpellation of youth in these contexts (Althusser, 2014; Butler, 1990) and the production of Muslim identity discourses across time and space (Badran 2009; Bhabha, 2004; Dunne, Durrani, Fincham and Crossouard, 2017; Marsden, 2008).

In this vein, Mamdani (2004) in his studies of the emergence of 'Islamic fundamentalism' or in his terms 'political Islam', points to the significance of political encounters between Islam and the West. More specifically, religion and Islam were set in opposition to the secular modernising ethos of former colonial nations of the west (Asad, 2003; Badran, 2009; Krämer 2013). This is especially relevant to each of our case study contexts in which religion and Islam have been integral to their national constitution. Rather than setting religion and nation apart, Badran (2009) shows how forms of Islamic discourse can refer both to '*umma*' - a global world community of Muslims – and to '*watan*' - people connected by attachment to a land or country' (p. 303). She illustrates how affective attachments to the nation and global (religious) networks can co-exist and intersect (see also Beck and Levy, 2013). The interconnections and intersections of global discourse and local relational contexts are highly significant in the construction of Muslim identities. As Bhabha (2004) alerts us, however, the particular and different histories of the nation and locality are also significant to identities production. These different histories, of colonialism for example, produce a plurality of identity narratives from multiple intersections between the local and global. These emergent multiplicities and pluralities are important to highlight especially in the face of tendencies towards the discursive homogenisation of Islam in the West.

Our interest here is in exploring how youth in their different socialities express their Muslim identity. More specifically, we explore the historical, social and political influences on the interpellation of youth and their narratives of Muslim identity as a means to illustrate the plurality of Islamic practices and belongings. We begin by describing the unifying features of Islam as articulated by youth across the country cases. Following this, we provide short synopses of the formation of each nation and the ways these political settlements of each nation remain entangled by religion and Islam in particular. We then return to the youth narratives and their accounts of being a Muslim within the complex relational contexts of their everyday lives. Through this, we illustrate multiplicity and forms of syncretism as Islam and local culture accommodate each other within the different local and national

social dynamics. Finally, we move beyond the nation to youth discussions of the global political positioning of Islam and its implications for their own identity narratives. They expressed their resistance and sense of injustice as they pointed to global discursive flows and the divisory use of Islam for political manipulation within national and global contexts. In concluding we draw together the above elements of our analysis to highlight the specificities of the ways that local, national and global politics produce and configure plural ways of being a Muslim.

Methodology

The data analysed in the paper derive from focus group discussions (FGDs) with youth in Lebanon, Nigeria, Pakistan and Senegal. These discussions focused on youth articulations of their identity. In each FGD youth participants completed a bio data sheet and prompted by a local researcher engaged in discussions on issues of their identities in terms of nationality, ethnicity, religion and gender. The research instruments developed collaboratively by the UK research team are available as appendices in Dunne et al., (2017). The participants were volunteers accessed through educational institutions and in the vast majority of cases the local researcher was matched to the FGD participants in terms of gender and religion. The central concern was to create a space for youth participants to freely narrate their identities, and generate discussions of their differences from others. All research interactions were completed according to University of Sussex ethical guidelines.

In all there were 58 interviews involving 276 youth participants in equal numbers by gender. Each interview conducted in a language selected by the participants lasted between 40 minutes and 90 minutes. Participants' permissions were given to record all FGDs. These were subsequently translated into English and fully transcribed. The textual data was analysed against the main themes of the interview schedule initially for each focus group and subsequently for each national context. The detailed analysis of the interview scripts were used to construct a depiction of the identity narratives of youth in each context and to highlight differences. The analysis drew on a theoretical framework related to identity and was supported by frequent group discussions between the four UK based researchers who had responsibilities for the conduct of the research in their respective country context. Further discussions of the approach to the research are provided in Durrani and Crossouard (Paper 3 in this issue) and Fincham and Dunne (Paper 4 in this issue).

In this paper we focus on youth narratives of their Islamic identity across the four case study contexts. Given the importance of context to our analysis here we provide a summary overview of their respective Muslim populations. With over 90% Muslims Senegal and Pakistan are relatively

homogenous with respect to religion. In Pakistan the Muslim population is overwhelmingly Sunni. There are a small proportion of Shi'a who are estimated to be around 12-15% of all Muslims in the country. Less than 4% of the population are non-Muslims, including Christians (the largest group), Hindus and Parsis (GoP, 1998) as well as Ahmadis, who consider themselves Muslims but are categorised as non-Muslims by the state in 1974. In Senegal, over 90% are described as Sunni Muslims with strong Sufi influences. There are about 4% Catholic Christians with around 1% each of Ahmadis and traditional African religions (CIA, 2014).

In the two other case studies, Nigeria and Lebanon, the multi-religious national populations have made the statistics on religion rather sensitive. In Nigeria religion is not included in census data and in Lebanon there has not been a census since 1932. Both countries are reported to have over 50% Muslims. In Nigeria, they are predominantly Sunni Muslims and located mostly in the north of the country. There are also a small minority Shi'a Muslims. Another 40% are comprised of Christians with Catholics and Protestants located largely in the South East and South West respectively. A further 10% practice traditional religion (CIA, 2015). In Lebanon, around 54% are Muslims with a slightly higher proportion of Shi'a than Sunni Muslims. There are just over 5% Druze who are not regarded as Islamic by other Muslims. Over 40% are Christians including Catholics, Maronites and Eastern Orthodox religions (CIA, 2017).

Overall, these figures suggest the extent of the variations in how Islam is understood across the case country studies. There are other dimensions of difference between the case study countries and details of these are included in the introductory paper of this special issue. For the purposes of this paper in which we discuss the connections between the local national and the global contexts, their regional locations are also important. These include a range from West Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.

The contexts and Islam

The national contexts in which our young participants claimed their identities were evidently diverse in multiple ways. Despite this, there were significant similarities irrespective of location or sect (also see Paper 2 in this issue). Firstly, youth across the case studies articulated similar ideals and relations with respect to Islam. Secondly, they fabricated identity narratives in which their different national identities were inextricably interwoven with their religious belongings (See Papers 3 and 4 in this issue for more detailed discussion).

In specific reference to Islam the youth participants across the case study countries described and declared the central importance of Islam to their lives and identities. FGD questions about what it means to be a Muslim produced very similar responses from the different locations. Irrespective of sect, youth re-iterated the importance of a constant and active striving to be a 'good' Muslim in everyday life practices:

[Islam is performed] ... *'in actions, in deeds and in behaviour'*

(Ismaili Muslim Female Pakistan).

Consistent with the Sunni and Ismaili youth in Pakistan other participants described the importance of 'beliefs and embodied ritual practices'. Islam was described as 'pure' and 'right' and the key daily ritual of prayer offered five times a day was specified. In Senegal too the commonalities across Islam were voiced:

... it's the same book which is followed, it's the same principles and all that...

(Muslim Male Senegal)

In Lebanon too, despite contemporary conflicts between Sunni and Shi'a the youth participants described a shared lifestyle among Muslims. The youth also provided several attributes of Muslims that included:

'... believing in one God, Allah';

'... followers of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the last messenger of Allah';

'... believing in the Qur'an'; '... understanding the meaning of Qur'an',

'... spending life according to the Qur'an, the Islamic point of view'

Youth responses included multiple references to the hijab:

Ok, a typical Nigerian Muslim supposed to be wearing hijab always. ... all her body is supposed to be covered.

(Muslim Male Nigeria)

... We wear hijab and loose clothes. ... We must be discreet. Women have to abide by religious doctrines more than men.

(Muslim Female Lebanon)

While the hijab is evidently an iconic and highly gendered symbol of Islam (Velayati, 2007), we did not engage with youth about the many different reasons for wearing it, for example as a religious practice, gender submission or a political statement. In Paper 7 of this special issue, we provide an exploration of this and other forms of gender symbolism as deeply significant to both the religious and national identities of youth across all case study nations.

The final common dominant theme was of Islam as a religion of peace not only for Muslims but also across the globe:

Islam means peace. A Muslim is a person who spreads peace.

(Sunni Muslim Female Pakistan)

There was a strong sense that this peace extended beyond their own local communities into the wider social world:

Nigeria is different from other countries because of peaceful co-existence. Despite the fact that we practice two major religions in Nigeria but we live in peace because we actually live as brothers ...

(Muslim Male Nigeria)

Being Muslim is believing in the unity of God and in Mohamed as the messenger of God, to carry out the five daily prayers, to believe that all other people who are Muslim are our brothers and to love them like our own brothers

(Muslim Female Senegal)

The Islamic requirement is not just to take care of the needs of other Muslims but all human beings.

(Sunni Muslim Male Pakistan)

This peace was associated with an active moral sense of 'right' and against injustice:

We support peace and prosperity for the whole world. We raise our voice for the right thing.

(Sunni Muslim Male Pakistan)

The Shi'a have responsibility for Lebanon and the world. We defend our rights and the rights of the oppressed.

(Shi'a Muslim Male Lebanon)

If there is some injustice happening somewhere, as Muslims and as human beings we condemn it. I am proud as we always raise our voice ... against cruelty.

(Sunni Muslim Male Pakistan)

The second dimension of commonality across the cases concerns the ways that identity narratives integrated nation and religion. As Badran (2009) suggested, the youth fluidly drew together the global and the particularities of their localities in their discourses of belonging. In Senegal and Pakistan, with more than 90% Sunni Muslims, Islam was intricately interwoven in the description of the nation. In these contexts, the 'others' of youth identities were located by youth beyond the national boundaries. These often referred to the external players who were significant in the periods leading up to and during national formation and struggles for independence. Islam was a key dimension of distinction from former colonising states, France and Great Britain as well as neighbouring countries.

In the multi-religious states of Nigeria and Lebanon references to the work of Christian European colonial powers in the formation of their nation states provided an important axis of national belonging and religious distinction from the colonisers. Although their national imaginaries were fractured by religion, youth identity discourses sutured these together and maintained distinction by acknowledging the religious 'others' within (rather than external to) their nations. A sustained sense of injustice was common to the youth narratives in all the four nations which can be traced back to the settlement and establishment of their post-colonial states (see Papers 3 and 4 of this issue for further elaboration).

Difference and hybridity across national contexts

The research participants we are focusing on here included Shi'a, and Sufi although they were predominantly Sunni Muslim youth. The strong entanglements of religion with nation however produced pluralities in their narratives of Islamic identity influenced by the specifics of their national formation and extant social configurations. In this section, we elaborate the intersection of religious and national identities in each context in historical perspective. This lays out the discursive social field

that youth in their respective locations appropriated to constitute themselves as intelligible subjects (Butler, 1997). Through attending in what follows to the specifics of their national formation, we hope to develop more nuanced accounts of youth identity narratives that highlight plural ways of being a Muslim.

We begin with Lebanon whose population includes Shi'a and Sunni Muslims as well as Christians and multiple other smaller religious sects. Our youth participants in Lebanon were largely Shi'a Muslim. In this region Christianity predates Islam and it is described as the meeting place of the east and the west. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire the borders of Lebanon were defined by the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916). This included Christian populations settled around Mount Lebanon as well as territories to the North and South largely populated by Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. These territories together formed the multi-religious nation of Lebanon. It was put under French Mandate by the League of Nations in 1920 with the first Lebanese constitution set down on May 23, 1926 (Hakim, 2013). On November 22, 1943, Lebanon officially declared its independence.

Religion was integral to the definition of Lebanon. Hierarchies of government position and power, set down along religious lines, were entrenched by the 1989 *Ta'if* Agreement that established a confessional system of governance in Lebanon. Specifically, only a Maronite Christian could take up the position of President, the Prime Minister was a Sunni Muslim and the Speaker of the Parliament Shi'a Muslim. This rigid hierarchical order has been sustained despite demographic changes over time related to a higher Muslim birth rate and the emigration of large numbers of Maronite Christians. The legitimacy of the power-sharing arrangement has been questioned which has led to feelings of mistrust between religious communities within Lebanon. As we will discuss later it has led to a nation continually disrupted by internal and external conflicts that refer to religious difference. In this context, the internal religious others within the nation strongly reverberate within the Lebanese Shi'a youth narratives of identity (For more detail see Paper 4 in this special issue and Dunne et al., 2017).

In contrast, both Senegal and Pakistan are over 90% Muslim and their much later establishment as independent postcolonial nations was predominantly against the 'other' of the colonising European Christian nations of France and Britain respectively. The specific histories of emergence, however, have produced different narratives of religious belonging within each nation. In Senegal, Islam arrived shortly after 1000AD via Berber trade routes with North Africa (Dunne et al., 2017). Significantly, most Senegalese Sunni Muslims belong to one of four Sufi 'brotherhoods' (Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya, Mouride and Layenne) that have defining roles in the practices of Islam and have been influential in national

and regional politics (Cruise O'Brien, 2003; Diouf, 2002; Harrison, 1988). Indeed, the absence of any significant regional tensions or violence in Senegal has been accredited to these Sufi brotherhoods (Cruise O'Brien, 2003). Interestingly, despite the nation being overwhelmingly Muslim, Leopold Senghor, the first president of independent Senegal proclaimed a secular republican government at independence in 1960. This was in line with the position adopted by its former colonising power France. The constitutional effect meant that political parties were barred from appealing to racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic, gender or regional identities (Hartman, 2010). For Senegalese youth, however, religion was articulated as integral to their sense of national belonging and as a significant dimension of contrast with the former colonising power of France.

Pakistan, on the other hand, became a Muslim majority state in 1947 and proclaimed itself an Islamic Republic in 1956 to mark both independence from Britain and its partition from India on religious lines. Sunni Islam remains central to official and popular discourses of national identity and is constantly mobilised to forge national unity (Durrani and Dunne, 2010). Displacement, migration, looting, rioting and violence especially against women were integral to the traumatic struggles in the foundation of the postcolonial state. Religion and Islam were used as a unifying character of the post-colonial nation. This was taken up and accentuated in later government regimes producing an intricate interweaving of religion with nation pitched against external antagonistic non-Muslim 'others' who included British Christians and Indian Hindus. This positioning remains sedimented in collective memory and in youth narratives of belonging and later in this paper we examine the ways that contemporary geo-political struggles reanimate these differences.

Finally, Nigeria gained Independence in 1960 and became a Federal Republic in 1963. The nation-state was formed by the British colonial administration in an amalgamation of three neighbouring territories. This drew together populations from a range of distinct religious, language and ethnic backgrounds. Over time Nigeria has experienced several conflicts, notably those against the British colonial administration; attempts at secession by the South Eastern region in the Biafran War; inter-ethnic conflict in the Niger Delta, Plateau State, Kaduna State and Kano; coups, attempted coups, military regimes and the insurgencies of Boko Haram, resulting in a 'state of emergency' declared in some northern States. The regional geographies and histories of national formation are constantly produced and revived through these conflicts, heightening group distinctions from internal 'other' Nigerians focused predominantly on religious and ethnic lines (Dunne et al., 2017). The scars of national formation emerge in a 'North' - 'South' regional distinction which is overlain by Muslim – Christian differences. The differences produce internal others that are widely recruited in youth narratives of belonging.

In this section, we have shown how the different histories of national formation and independence of the four postcolonial states are infused with religion and religious distinction. As described in the previous section, these nation-religion intersections were a sustained motif in the identity narratives of youth participants in all the country contexts. The particular colonial histories and contexts of national formation incorporated religion and provided different configurations of external and internal others with and against which youth identities were articulated. The key point here is that discourses of youth identity, especially those that draw on religion, cannot be assumed to reflect pre-modern societies resistant to development (Asad, 2003; Mamdani, 2004). Rather they echo European colonial impositions on people and territories, especially in the construction of nation-states and their different political settlements for independence. The case study countries illustrate a range in terms of their encounters with colonialism, time since independence and geo-political contexts. Their histories have a fundamental influence on the ways the independent national territories and citizens distinguish themselves from colonial power (Chatterjee, 1993) which in turn constitute their respective discourses of belonging. At this point, we turn to explore the different ways youths' discourses of national and religious belonging were mutually inflected in the different relational contexts of their everyday lives.

Fusions of religion and culture

The focus in this section is upon the ways that Islam has reciprocally infused with local traditions working with and through community relations and practices. We explore this through the narratives of young Muslims within their specific local contexts to highlight unique syncretic fusions. This is intended to underscore the importance of local social relations to discourses of identity and at the same time provide a counter to prevalent Western imaginaries of universal, homogenised Islamic practices (Laborde, 1995; Mamdani, 2004).

It is informative here to consider Pakistan as an Islamic state and the ways that certain forms of Sunni Islam dominate, to effectively subordinate other Sunni sects, Shi-ia and Sufi Muslims. Further, the state has appropriated the right to define who counts as Muslim (Iqtidar, 2012). Since independence, Islam – Sunni Islam - has been invoked in the discourse of the nation and national unity despite ethnic diversity, religious differences and uneven development. The nominal uniformity with respect to Sunni Islam, nevertheless provides space for claims to religious distinction around 'proper' practice. As illustrated below it is used to re-iterate historic regional antagonisms within Pakistan and to denigrate the dominant ethnic group as lax or improper Muslims.

Pakhtuns follow Islam strictly ... Punjabis don't. They visit graves and shrines. They do not observe fast.

(Sunni Muslim Female Pakistani [Pakhtun])

In predominantly Muslim Senegal rather than claim a singular 'proper' Islam youth acknowledge the ways Islam has been interpreted and practiced differently across the country.

Interviewer: Is there a difference between being a Lébou Muslim and a Diola Muslim, or a Sérère Muslim, or a Peul Muslim - is there a difference between Muslims of different ethnicities?

Yes, there are some small differences in their traditions, for example the Lébou Muslims practice the 'ndeup'.

Interviewer: That's a traditional ceremony / to chase away evil spirits?

Yes, that's right, and it also helps to cure sick people, or those who are under the influence of evil spirits.

Interviewer: And is that not forbidden by religion?

Yes, it's forbidden by Muslim religion, but, ok, in Africa, as we say, it's black Islam (Islam noir) that we live by here.

In fact all the ethnic groups have preserved their culture - as Senghor said, you must first root yourself in your own culture before opening up to others. They were rooted in these cultures before opening up to Islam - that's why they still have certain practices.

(Muslim Female FGD Senegal)

The Senegalese youth references to 'Black Islam' or 'African Islam' explicitly emphasised the ways that Islamic and local or traditional beliefs and practices accommodate one another. The Mouride brotherhood, for example, engage in annual pilgrimages or the 'Magal' gatherings in Touba, Senegal, where the brotherhood was founded. In addition, studies of the Layenne, a small sect localised in north of Dakar, also illustrate a highly syncretic form of Islam that combines Sufism with animist practices (Laborde 1995). Such fusions provide local distinction that work as axes of differentiation

from Islamic practices of the Middle East and at the same time illustrate syncretism and multiplicity within Islam.

In the texts there's no difference (in Islam), but in ways to practice - if we were for example, in a country like Indonesia, Iran or Pakistan, I would be killed if I went out dressed like this. That's clear. There's a way to dress, there's a way to practise.

(Muslim Female Senegal)

The claim to African Islam was more muted in the larger more diverse context of Nigeria. Such differences attest to the ways that the specifics of extant social relations in context have an important bearing on Islam and Muslim practices (Nolte, 2019). The Nigerian youth participants described their sense of an intergenerational change which for them was realised in a greater importance of religion than other historically significant markers of identity:

Religion can shape any other thing, you forget about ethnicity when you are religious, you forget about gender when you are religious, you forget about anything...

(Muslim Male Nigeria)

Most youth participants had observed Islam across the globe (for example, in Pakistan, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia) through social media and had connected with youth beyond Nigeria. This had increased their self-awareness, influenced their social and cultural relations and produced shifts especially with respect to religious consciousness and practices:

We do know how we practice Islam, why Saudi Arabia is practicing Islam but in the olden days we only knew that we are Muslims. We were not practicing the religion as a religion.

(Muslim Female Nigeria)

The dynamic ways that Islam infused their social lives was not unproblematic and they offered examples of moments of tension and compromise in navigating their religious, ethnic and cultural identities. These included dilemmas about accepting hospitality like drinking alcohol when visiting relatives or at a function as well as with respect to their friendships and for the males especially their social/sexual relations. Their personal experiences and observations of foreign contexts afforded them a recognition of the ways culture and poverty had contributed to variations in religious practices and forms of syncretism (Dunne et al., 2017).

Invocations of a 'pure', 'proper', received, transnational form of Islam (Mamdani, 2004) were nevertheless used to re-assert historic regional differences and distinction from the internal others in the south of the country. In particular, Yoruba Muslims from the south were vilified as not quite 'proper' Muslims:

A Muslim from Yoruba land is different from Kano or other (northern) state ...

... they value culture more than religion it's just ignorance of religion

(Muslim Female FGD Nigeria)

The spectre of a pure Islamic practice produced a discursive register within youth identity narratives that invoked a hierarchy and a superiority over internal others seemingly based on the efforts to expunge syncretic forms of Islam. It was constantly re-iterated to substantiate the central identity claim for Northern Nigerian Muslims that pivoted on both religion and region. As these do not map directly onto each other in Nigeria, the achievement of a unique identity required both regional distinction from Southern Nigerians and religious othering from Christians and, more problematically, from Yoruba Muslims from the south. The (ant-)agonistic social relations within Nigeria since its formation continue to be inflected within the specific and contemporary identity narratives and practices of Nigerian Muslim youth.

Finally, we turn away from the secular state contexts of Western Africa to Lebanon which in contrast is a confessional state structured by a hierarchy of religious difference as described earlier in this paper. The Lebanese Shi'a youth are located in complex sets of social relations and their community has been politically and economically marginalised in Lebanon. Shi'a are at the bottom of the governance hierarchy. They are part of the national and regional Muslim majority but within this they are minority Muslim sect nationally and regionally. Ethnically they are Arab who dominate the wider region but unlike most Arabs they are not Sunni Muslims. To add to this most Shi'a Muslims are not Arab. In a nation and region of historic tensions between Christians and Muslims and between Sunni and Shi'a, the young participants recognized multiplicities in Islamic practice and understood the ways that narratives of religious identity were contingent on and intersected by discourses of national and regional belonging. This was integral to the nexus of their lives in which religious, ethnic, national and regional belongings have been continually mobilised in multiple and on-going conflicts. Nevertheless, as illustrated in an earlier section, the Shi'a youth were able to recognise differences and yet find commonalities in practice with Sunni Muslims despite this representing a major schism in the Islamic world. Similar to the Nigerian youth, the young Lebanese participants also recognised the significance of social media in changing relations across sectarian divisions:

I think it (social media) changed the way we think about other people. In the past, the sects did not interact, but now we communicate with each other from other parts of Lebanon. I made a few friends from other sects and from other places, for example from Tripoli (northern Lebanese city which has a Sunni majority). We used to think that all Sunni don't like Shi'a, but now we see that some of them like us.

(Shi'a Muslim Female Lebanon)

In broader terms the youth drew on images of the Lebanese as 'modern' and European-like to claim distinction from other countries in the region and Muslims elsewhere. The expression of difference was often articulated in terms of gender and the regulation of women (Peteet, 2006; see also Paper 7 for an extended discussion of this). So while there was strong pressure on young Shi'a women to acquiesce within an established social-symbolic order, some young women were taking up opportunities to form more transformative hybrid ways of being Muslim:

We don't wear hijab or keep the dress code, and we listen to music (which is traditionally forbidden). But we pray and fast and do Ashura. We are Shi'a on our own terms.

(Shi'a Muslim Female Lebanon)

Informed by daily life experiences, young Muslims across the case studies articulated the ways that religion infuses their respective social and relational milieu. Their discussions illustrate the tensions and struggles in navigating their identities and belonging and, importantly here, the ways these dynamics produce multiple ways of being Muslim.

Political pressures on Muslim identities

In the previous sections we have provided youth narratives of commonality among Muslims and then explored how histories of national formation and local social relations within each context produce a range of hybrid identities. In this section, we turn to focus on the work of local and global politics in the production of multiplicity in the narratives of belonging of Muslim youth. Through this, we intend to further illustrate the range of influences in the production of Islamic identity. This is significant to our critique of underdeveloped and truncated representations of Muslims in overly uniform and essentialised ways. It is also important for resisting the over-generalised construction of Islamic societies as pre-modern (Asad, 2003).

We start with Senegal as a Muslim majority country that is relatively conflict free. Nevertheless, the youth recounted internal conflicts that related to political manoeuvring during presidential elections.

As mentioned earlier, despite its foundation as a secular republic, four Sufi 'brotherhoods' have exerted a strong influence on national and regional politics in Senegal since and before independence (Cruise O'Brien, 2003; Diouf, 2002; Harrison, 1988). Indeed, in the 2012 elections previous president Wade explicitly politicised these brotherhoods in his unsuccessful and somewhat illegitimate attempts for a third term (Mbow, 2009; Hartman, 2010). The manipulation of religion for political ends as well as the unconstitutional attempt at re-election were the cause of youth unrest and riots in Dakar (Dunne, Durrani, Crossouard and Fincham, 2014; Crossouard and Dunne, 2015).

The use of religion within regional and national politics was also recognised by the Northern Nigerian youth. They described the manipulation of religion by those in pursuit of political power and expressed dissatisfaction with the reiteration of a north-south, Muslim- Christian divide during the lead up to elections.

There is nothing like difference between the Southerner and the Northerner. ... the only difference is that this democracy. Democracy divides the nation. It is only politicians and the media that are propagating this thing. But in normal Nigeria, there is nothing, there is nothing like a Southerner or a Northerner

... there is concept of divide-and-rule that our leaders introduced to us, your blood brother who happens to be a Christian will hate you because of what is introduced to him by politicians.

(Muslim Male Nigeria FGD)

~~~~~

*... now as we're approaching this election a lot of text messages in churches and in Mosques, religious leaders campaigning to their followers to go to their fellow faithful and that is what is going on here.*

*Interviewer: So to vote along religious lines?*

*Yes.*

*Democracy divides the nation. It is only politicians and the media that are propagating this thing. But in normal Nigeria, there is nothing, there is nothing like a Southerner or a Northerner.*

*(Muslim Male Nigeria FGD)*



The disillusionment with the divisory tactics in democratic processes in Nigeria compounded youth dissatisfaction with the operations of the State. Several youth linked corrupt political leadership and the lack of initiatives to support economic and social development (despite election promises) to the rise of Boko Haram. Nevertheless, the negative national and global association of Boko Haram with Islam and Northern Nigeria resonated strongly and negatively with the youth participants:

*... the southerners sees northerners as terrorist[s]. ... And it is not only in Nigeria the whole world sees every Muslim as terrorist but it is not the truth because they have bad view about Muslims that's why.*

*(interrupts) they see you Muslims from the northern state as Boko Harams*  
*(Muslim Females Nigeria)*

~~~~~

... in America anywhere you see a Muslim he is just seen like terrorist ...
(Muslim Male Nigeria)

The specific multi-religious context of Nigeria clearly has different implications for how young Muslims perform their identities compared to those in Senegal. The young Nigerians strenuously rejected the label of terrorism and provided accounts of their fears and difficulties in travelling to the south of the country as well as internationally. In one Male Muslim FGD youth reflected on the compounding effects of global political machinations with specific reference to the colonial construction of Nigeria that encompassed regional /religious fractures that over generation and location continue to trouble the nation.

... All these demarcation of countries, continents is just being programmed by the western world.

(Muslim Male Nigeria)

The influence of national and wider global politics on the contexts in which youth performed their identities was more acute in multi-religious Lebanon. The Lebanese Shi'a youth participants were situated in a region of sustained conflict between Muslims, Christians and Israelis as well between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims. They experienced and understood multiple different ways of being a Muslim within and outside their national borders.

Iran is more conservative than Lebanon. The most conservative communities are in Iran and Iraq. Shi'a in Europe don't pray or follow the rules. Shi'a in South Lebanon are different than

those in Beirut. We are more committed. Families in Beqa'a Valley are more conservative than others.

(Shi'a Muslim Female Lebanon)

They highlighted the importance of specific contexts to identity as they navigated their own identities within the complexities of the politics and cultural / religious segmentation of their own nation as well as the region, which has been marked by on-going and contemporary conflicts. The turbulent social and political arena has variously involved neighbouring countries including the regional superpowers of (Shi'a) Iran and (Sunni) Saudi Arabia as well as Israel and countries from the west and the UN. The youth expressed their national allegiance through reference to recurrent conflict with the common enemy, Israel. However, they also acknowledged that their Shi'a identity united them to communities outside their national borders. Several male Shi'a youth affirmed their duty to defend other Shi'a co-religionists and indicated that they had gone to fight with Hezbollah in Syria against 'the Sunni terrorists' who were also fellow Arabs and Lebanese compatriots. In the regional context of increased sectarian conflict with Sunni Islam, multi-religious Lebanon remains politically fragile. The complex interplay of local, national, regional and international relations and intervention shaped and circumscribed experiences and life choices of Shi'a youth. The imbrication of their identities is highly sensitive to the dynamic social and political scenario that goes far beyond a singular and essentialised version of Muslim identity.

The historic and contemporary discourses of national and religious belonging permeated youth identity narratives in Pakistan as well. For the Sunni majority, religion and nation were barely distinct from one another. The on-going struggles against India, Israel, Europe and the US had produced a sense of Islam under siege. Adding to the history of violence and conflict, there has been interference by the US especially since 9/11 and the declared 'War on Terror'. The international pressure was drawn upon by Pakistani youth to make strong affective investments in their Muslim nation. For these young people, the Pakistan Army was revered both for policing 'proper' Islamic practice within the nation and for protecting people from the many national/religious enemies:

Pakistan has a very strong and independent military ... Powerful countries, such as the US, China and India recognise the might of Pakistan Army.

(Muslim Male Pakistan)

The discourse of the 'War on Terror' was strongly apprehended by youth and it appeared to promote 'thick' national / religious attachments that perversely had the potential to bolster Islamism or political Islam (Mamdani, 2004). As in the earlier case of Nigeria, the youth participants were exercised by discourses of terrorism associated with Islam:

They [terrorists] are not our people; they are not Muslims; they are not true Muslims; Islam teaches unity, Islam teaches love, peace, prosperity, and affection.

(Ismaili Muslim Female Pakistan)

The Pakistani youth, both Muslim and non-Muslim, were extremely critical of the national and international media. They were described as both exaggerating and sensationalising and thereby perpetrating militant and terrorist subjectivities for young Pakistanis. The international media was particularly 'implicated in creating a negative image for Pakistan' (Christian Female Pakistan).

... we are not terrorists, we are peaceful people who love education. Why is the world determined to name us as terrorists? Even when they [the US and its allies] interfere in our internal affairs and play with our integrity, we remain positive [non-violent].

(Sunni Muslim Male Pakistan)

The identity narratives of youth in Pakistan further illustrate the importance of the ways that global discourses around Islam are refracted within local contexts. Their expressions of their sense of injustice are provoked by undercurrents of Islamophobia that they read in the international framing of their national and religious identities. Across all four case studies the youth recognised negative projections of their religious identities in particular. They resisted these while recognising problematics within their respective contexts. Significantly, they pointed to distasteful internal, national manipulation of religion for political ends. They also referred to the historic context of their post-colonial national formation and contemporary global geo-politics as germane to their articulations of religious belonging.

Concluding summary

In this paper we have explored what being a Muslim means for young people within the different social and historical contexts of their experience. Through a layered analysis we have highlighted diversity and plurality of Muslim youth subjectivities. Despite recognition of certain commonalities

with respect to religious practice claimed by Muslim youth, our explorations of the intersection of religious and national identity highlight diversity and multiplicity.

Our analysis has shown how the formation of each of the four post-colonial nations instituted differences within national populations. The unique political settlements of each of the nations at independence have provided different axes of internal and external distinction that relate variously to religion, ethnicity, geography and region. These axes of difference produce a range of discourses through which youth are interpellated. The particular histories of these national formations intersect and entangle with articulations of religious belonging to produce a multiplicity of Muslim youth identity narratives. With special attention to local everyday contexts, we have elaborated the ways that Islam and local social / cultural relations accommodate each other to produce particular syncretic forms of Islam. The relational particularities of space and place are critical to understandings of being a Muslim and the professing of faith in different contexts. This multiplicity stands in contrast to the singularity and uniformity of Islam often circulating in global discourses. Youth participants were strongly resistant to these and especially sensitive to the implied associations of Islam with terrorism.

In summary the discussion in this paper has highlighted plural forms of Islamic practice that derive from contextual diversity that is evident firstly, in their different processes of national formation, secondly in the extant social and cultural relations and thirdly in the location of their religious nation within global political discourses. Taken together these present a direct critique of the essentialising and homogenising representation of Muslims and Islamic practice often found in discursive tropes circulating in the west and globally.

References

- Althusser, L. (2014). *On the reproduction of capitalism: ideology and ideological state apparatuses*. (translated by G.M. Goshgarian). London: Verso.
- Asad, T. (2003). *Formations of the Secular. Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Badran, M. (2009). *Feminism in Islam. Secular and Religious Convergences*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.
- Beck, U., & Levy, D. (2013). Cosmopolitanized Nations: Re-imagining Collectivity in World Risk Society. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 30(2), 3-31.
- Bhabha, H. K. (2004). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge: London and New York.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

- Butler, J. (1997). *Excitable speech. A politics of the performative*, Routledge: London and New York.
- Chatterjee, P. (1993). *The Nation and Its Fragments. Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Chichester: Princeton University Press.
- Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (2014) World Factbook - Senegal. Retrieved from www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sg.html
- Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (2015) The World Factbook. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>
- Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (2017) The World Factbook. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html>
- Crossouard, B., & Dunne, M. (2015). Politics, gender and youth citizenship in Senegal: youth policing of dissent and diversity. *International Review of Education*, 61(1), 43-60.
- Cruise O'Brien, D. (2003). *Symbolic Confrontations: Muslims Imagining the State in Africa*. London: Hirst & Company.
- Diouf, M. (2002). The Senegalese Murid Trade Diaspora and the Making of a Vernacular Cosmopolitanism. In C. A. Breckenridge, S. Pollock, H. K. Bhabha & D. Chakrabarty (Eds.), *Cosmopolitanism* (pp. 111-137). Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Dunne, M., Durrani, N., Crossouard, B. & Fincham, K. (2014). Youth as Active Citizens Report. Youth Working Towards their Rights to Education and Sexual and Reproductive Health. University of Sussex: Oxfam Novib, The Netherlands.
- Dunne, M., Durrani, N., Fincham, K., & Crossouard, B. (2017). *Troubling Muslim Youth Identities. Nation, Religion, Gender*. London: Palgrave.
- Durrani, N., & Dunne, M. (2010). Curriculum and national identity: exploring the links between religion and nation in Pakistan. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 42(2), 215-240.
- Government of Pakistan (1998). *Percentage Population by Religion, Mother Tongue, and Disability 1998, Pakistan*. Retrieved from <http://www.pap.org.pk/statistics/population.htm#tab1.4>
- Hakim, C. (2013). *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea, 1840-1920*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Harrison, C. (1988). *France and Islam in West Africa, 1860-1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hartmann, C. (2010). Senegal's party system: the limits of formal regulation. *Democratization*, 17(4), 769-786.
- Iqtidar, H. (2012). Cosmopolitanism, religion and inter-civilizational dialogue. In G. Delanty (Ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Cosmopolitan Studies* (pp. 198-207). Abingdon: Routledge.

- Krämer, G. (2013). Modern but not secular: Religion, identity and the ordre public in the Arab Middle East. *International Sociology*, 28(6), 629-644.
- Laborde, C. (1995). *La confrerie layenne et les Lebou du Senegal: Islam et culture traditionnelle en Afrique*. Bordeaux: Centre d'etude d'Afrique noire, Institut d'etudes politiques de Bordeaux.
- Mahmood, S. (2009). Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide? In T. Asad, W. Brown, J. Butler & S. Mahmood (Eds.), *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury and Free Speech* (pp. 64-100). UC Berkeley: Doreen B. Townsend Centre for the Humanities.
- Mamdani, M. (2004). *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim. America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Marsden, M. (2008). Muslim Cosmopolitans? Transnational Life in Northern Pakistan. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 67(1), 213-247.
- Mbow, P. (2009). Secularism, Religious Education, and Human Rights in Senegal, *Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa (ISITA). Working Paper Series*. Evanston, Illinois: Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa, Buffett Centre, Northwestern University.
- Nolte, I. (2019) Introduction: Learning to be Muslim in West Africa. Islamic Engagements with Diversity and Difference. *Islamic Africa*, 10, 11-25.
- Peteet, J. (2006). Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian Intifada: A cultural politics of violence, In M. Ghoussoub & E. Sinclair-Webb (Eds.) *Imagined Masculinities: male identity and culture in the modern Middle East* (pp. 103-126). London: Saqi.
- Velayati, M. (2007). Perceptions contrastées du hijab parmi les ressortissants iraniens résidant au Royaume-Uni. *Social Compass*, 54(3), 435-451.