

Article

Religion, Belonging, and Active Citizenship: A Systematic Review of Literature on Muslim Youth in Australia

Mehmet Ozalp *  and Mirela Ćufurović 

Centre for Islamic Studies and Civilisation, Charles Sturt University, Sydney, NSW 2144, Australia; mcufurovic@csu.edu.au

* Correspondence: mozalp@csu.edu.au

Abstract: Muslim youth have been under scrutiny over the last two decades from a radicalisation and countering violent extremism lens. This bias has largely carried itself to research conducted on Muslim youth in the West. This article undertakes a systematic review and analysis of literature conducted on Muslim youth in the West and in Australia in the last two decades since 11 September 2001. The body of literature in this field can be grouped under three main themes: (1) the impact of terrorism policies and discourse on Muslim youth and their disengaged identities, (2) the relationship between religion (Islam) and civic engagement of Muslim youth, and (3) Muslim youth as active citizens. An important conclusion of this review is that most of the research is dated. There have been significant changes in the development of youth as they quickly evolve and adapt. The systematic review of literature exposed a number of gaps in the research: the current literature ignores generic adolescent factors and external social factors other than Islam that also influence Muslim youth; studies that examine both online and traditional activism and volunteering space are needed to understand the dynamics of change and shift; research needs to focus on Muslim youth who were born and raised in Australia rather than focus only on migrant youth; the ways some Muslim youth use their unique sense of identity as Australian Muslims to become successful citizens engaged in positive action is not known; how Muslim youth use avenues other than their faith to express themselves in civic engagement and their commitment to society is underexplored; it is not known the degree to which bonding networks influence the identity formation and transformation of Muslim youth; there is no research done to examine how adult–youth partnership is managed in organisations that successfully integrate youth in their leadership; there is a need to include Australian Muslim youth individual accounts of their active citizenship; there is a need to understand the process of positive Muslim youth transformations as a complement to the current focus on the radicalisation process. Addressing these gaps will allow a more complete understanding of Muslim youth in the West and inform educational and social policies in a more effective manner.

Keywords: Muslim youth; Muslim youth identity; Australian Muslim youth; disengaged identities; active citizenship; youth radicalisation; Muslim youth deradicalisation; civic engagement; Muslim civic engagement; youth civic engagement; Muslim youth in the west



Citation: Ozalp, Mehmet, and Mirela Ćufurović. 2021. Religion, Belonging, and Active Citizenship: A Systematic Review of Literature on Muslim Youth in Australia. *Religions* 12: 237. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12040237>

Academic Editor: Halim Rane

Received: 8 February 2021

Accepted: 17 March 2021

Published: 26 March 2021

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2021 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Muslim minority communities have been under scrutiny in the last two decades from the security lens of government and have been the subject of academic research. In this respect, the way Muslim communities evolve and integrate within Western societies is seen as a vital aspect of social cohesion. Within the broader research field on Muslims in the West, very little is known about Muslim youth active and engaged involvement—a trajectory that moves away from the radicalisation paradigm that has dominated public discourse and research in the post-9/11 world. The research output is even narrower when it comes to active participation of Australian Muslim youth. A focus on *engaged* Muslim youth identities as upstanding citizens and how their identities have evolved is much needed.

Research in the United States has highlighted that there is a strong correlation between religious identity and civic engagement, and individuals who have a strong commitment to religion are more likely to actively “give back” and engage with the social and political life of Western countries (Jones-Correa and Leal 2001). The main problem that arises with Muslim youth in Australia is that Muslim youth believe the wider Australian community do not understand who they are and what they believe in, with some maintaining that they are not accepted by the non-Muslim community and do not know if they could do enough to change the negative perceptions towards Muslims in general (Omar 2016).

This article critically evaluates existing literature on issues affecting Muslim youth in Western countries and specifically Muslim youth in Australia, focusing on three main themes repeatedly emerging throughout the literature reviewed: (1) the impact of terrorism policies and discourse on Muslim youth and their disengaged identities, (2) the relationship between religion (Islam) and civic engagement of Muslim youth, and (3) Muslim youth as active citizens in Australia. Although the literature presents these themes in a variety of contexts, the article primarily focuses on their application to the factors that contributed to the development of Muslim youth. The article refers to a variety of current scholarship on Muslim youth in Australia and elsewhere that has been published within the last two decades.

2. Methodology

Literature on Muslim youth in Australia (and the West) is scarce. The literature that does exist is largely focused on Muslim youth radicalisation and conflict of identity. Our aim was to see if the literature on Muslim youth extended beyond this focus—literature that looked into Muslim youth as similar to other youth in Australia and positive transformations where Muslim youth overcame difficult periods in their lives to become successful citizens engaged in positive action as opposed to the radicalisation process that is often the focus of research and policies. We also wanted to see if literature on Muslim youth issues were prevalent, such as issues that explored their adolescent experiences. Three key themes repeatedly emerged throughout the literature reviewed: (1) the impact of terrorism policies and discourse on Muslim youth and their disengaged identities, (2) the relationship between religion (Islam) and civic engagement of Muslim youth, and (3) Muslim youth as active citizens in Australia. Grouping the literature into these themes allowed us to identify any gaps that exist regarding Muslim youth in academia. It also allowed us to see the extent to which the current literature explored Muslim youth issues away from the radicalisation and security lens.¹

The literature review covers studies published within the last two decades—a very significant period shaped by 11 September 2001. The repercussions of ensuing events, counter-radicalisation and counter-terrorism policies, excessive media, and public scrutiny left indelible marks on an entire generation of Muslim youth, and it directly impacted their lives, identity, and place in society. Charles Sturt University library, the University of Sydney library, and the authors’ personal library resources were used to select sources. JSTOR, SAGE, ProQuest Central, and online searches using Google Scholar were also used to gather sources. The libraries were selected for their large collections. All sources that were selected are peer-reviewed, academic sources, published by reputable journals and publishing houses. A number of articles were also located through the reference list of relevant articles.

¹ Another issue that stems from most of the research articles on Muslim youth is the problem of researcher motivations. Neila Miled found that it is easy for the researcher to assume an “emancipatory mission” when researching Muslim youth whereby the researcher either knowingly and unknowingly attempts to solve Muslim youth issues *for* them instead of letting the youth *tell their stories*. This method is usually done with the aim of addressing or unpacking radicalisation amongst Muslim youth. As Miled said, “Doing research with Muslim youth is rather challenging at this time of global terrorism, radicalisation, Islamophobia and racism and at this time of enhanced securitisation and enforced silencing . . . it is hard to map the contours of a research done by a Muslim researcher researching Muslim youth; the boundaries of researcher/researched and the insider/outsider get blurry, fluid and changing as ‘the ethnographic life is not separable from the self’ . . . ” See (Miled 2019).

Descriptive search terms including Muslim youth in Australia, Australian Muslim youth, Muslim youth in the West, Australian-born Muslim youth, Muslim youth issues, Muslim youth transformations, Muslim youth active citizenship, religiosity amongst Muslim youth, Australian youth issues, Australian youth and leadership, religion and youth in Australia were used to retrieve research from library and online databases. Academics from the Centre of Islamic Studies and Civilisation at Charles Sturt University were also consulted to help guide our research.

While this literature review places a focus on Muslim youth, particularly in Australia, due to the scarcity of literature on the topic of Australian Muslim youth, the authors branched out to include literature on Muslim youth in the West and youth in the West more generally. Doing so allowed the authors to see what literature exists on youth and how these literatures can be applied to Australian Muslim youth experiences. It also allowed the authors to identify gaps within the research on Muslim youth and suggest areas where further research and literature is needed. The authors also limited the search to Australian-born or Western-born Muslim youth, as literature on migrant Muslim youth is plentiful due to its currency with policy makers, media, public, and therefore researchers. However, the authors, did include literature on some migrant youth experiences to identify links and differences between Australian-born and Western-born Muslim youth experiences, and by extension, any gaps.

The relevance and credibility of all sources were considered in this literature review. Sources were selected based on their relevance to the research focus. The authors placed a focus on articles that thematically aligned with the research purpose; as such, strong focus was placed on articles that explored and analysed Australian Muslim youth experiences.

3. Disengaged Muslim Identities in the Age of Terrorism

The increase in terrorist threats occurring in Western countries by extremist Islamist groups has spurred an interest in the growth of disengaged identities and radical attitudes among Muslim youth living in Western countries. Among the ethno-religious minorities in Australia, Muslim youth have become the “centre of critical attention and stereotypical depiction in terms of their faithfulness to liberal institutions and modern values” (Hosseini 2013). Such attitudes have also been applied to the global Muslim population. Marie Breen-Smyth argues that the term “suspect community” has emerged to capture the ideological discourses used to define Muslims as the “enemy within”.² She contends that being a suspect community does not necessarily mean that one is targeted for a particular reason; it also refers to “imagined” perceptions arising from public and official discourses emerging from the paradigms of the “war on terror”:

the community exists in the public suspicious mind, a public organised and created by a space of discourse focussed on security, insecurity, terrorism and threat and reproduced by media, security practitioners and political actors. (Breen-Smyth 2014)

Here, the term “suspect community” not only reinforces the image of Muslims as suspects in the subconscious minds of the public, but it also simultaneously influences the way Muslims perceive *themselves* as a suspect community and affects the types of perceptions Muslims have of their community and how they interact with their faith, others in society, the law, official policies and authorities. Thus, the allocation of suspicion on Muslims, Breen-Smyth (2014) argues, “silences, marginalises and prevents democratic participation of [Muslims]” and undermines “the possibility of peaceful politics [and] participatory democracy”.

While Breen-Smyth’s theory of the suspect community offers new insight into the way imagined communities are formed as a result of counter-terrorist efforts and are

² The term “suspect community” was first used by Hillyard to describe how Northern Irish populations became suspects through the implementation of counter-terrorist initiatives during the Northern Irish conflict. See (Hillyard 1993). The term has since been adopted to refer to the Muslim population post 9/11.

thus stigmatised, she does not offer critical evidence to support her claims nor does she refer to literature that explores the way Muslims have integrated in Western societies, where they have become more, rather than less, involved in “electoral politics and public affairs” (Breen-Smyth 2014). Moreover, her focus lies on the counter-terrorist efforts in Britain and its consequences on British Muslims—not specifically on Muslim youth—and she does not provide perspectives from British Muslims themselves who feel as if they are either a part of a suspect community or labelled as such. While a focus on Muslim youth and their feelings on being a suspect community and whether this impacts on their democratic participation would be a valuable contribution to literature on Islam, terrorism, and disengaged identities—a perspective that would have perhaps enriched Breen-Smyth’s analysis—Breen-Smyth does point to the way counter-terrorism efforts have a direct effect on Muslim identity in general, whereby such efforts distort Muslim identity, and poses questions on who they are and where they belong.

However, Adrian Cherney and Kristina Murphy (Cherney and Murphy 2016), have used the term suspect community to refer to the impact of terror on Australian Muslims. Unlike Breen-Smyth’s analysis, Cherney and Murphy use the term to highlight how the war on terror has contributed to the rise in efforts to counter-terrorist claims and build positive relationships with the Australian community, the law, authorities, and official policies.³ Even though such counter-terrorism efforts have been criticised for being more focussed on intelligence gathering rather than sincere efforts to build positive relationships with Australian Muslims, which has in turn caused Australian Muslims to suffer a “form of collective attribution”—where they have become “negatively tarnished because of violent extremism and terrorism committed in the name of Islam”—the war on terror has increased Muslims’ sense of religious and Australian identity (Cherney and Murphy 2016). However, such heightened feelings of belonging or strengthening of religious and/or national identity is usually in response to them feeling that they are perceived as a suspect community. That is, most of the Australian Muslims interviewed by Cherney and Murphy feel the need to reaffirm their identity against what does *not* define them.

Cherney and Murphy’s analysis of Australian Muslims being a suspect community sheds insight into how counter-terrorism efforts and the war on terror has caused Muslims in general to feel as if they do not belong in a society that increasingly sees them as the “other”. Their discussion is based on qualitative results stemming from interviews with a hundred or so Australian Muslims (selected from Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane) who have expressed their feelings and reactions to terrorism and counter-terrorism policies. Since their sample is relatively selective and small (they do acknowledge their limitations), it may not be representative of the entire Australian Muslim community. Their notion that the Australian Muslim community sees themselves primarily as a suspect community needs further research to be conclusive. Despite this, their analysis brings attention to the voices and concerns of Australian Muslims on the war on terror, their disdain with the counter-terrorism lens of Australian government’s relationship with the Muslim community, and the resulting negative influence it has on their sense of belonging.

The “need” for Australian Muslim youth to belong to society is a trajectory that consumes most political thought. Randa Abdel-Fattah (2020) writes on the assumption that the biggest threat to Muslim youth is “vulnerability to extremism endures as a taken-for-granted, uncontroversial ‘truth’ in public imagination” (p. 373). Moreover, the discursive “formation about Muslim youth as at-risk become a state of knowledge, a way of thinking and talking about young Muslims, ruling in and ruling out certain ways of talking about Muslim youth” (p. 373). Abdel-Fattah provides a background overview of terrorism and counter-terrorist measures in Australia since September 11, 2001, detailing the way the Muslim population is seen as a “suspect community”. She highlights the impact of counter-terrorism measures on minority discourse and the way these measures are framed about and around Muslims:

³ Other studies have also acknowledged this approach. See (Kundnani 2014; Pickering et al. 2008; Sentas 2014; Spalek 2013).

offensively, in wars fought in Iraq and Afghanistan against Muslims outside our borders; defensively, in laws and policing/security operations targeting Muslim threats inside our borders; and pre-emptively, in counter-radicalisation ‘soft’ programs for ‘the Muslim community’, with a focus on Muslim youth. This is the pool in which the potential future terrorist exists, where future danger lurks. (Abdel-Fattah 2020, p. 276)

Such trajectories are problematic, according to Abdel-Fattah, because the Muslim community, especially the Muslim youth, are constantly being “incited to speak, provoked to come forward and clarify their truth” (Abdel-Fattah 2020, p. 379)—a practice done by the Muslim youth and their community that subjects them to trajectories of identity, values, and belonging, which, evidently, has been the centre of scholarly literature regarding Muslim youth in Australia and elsewhere. The same conclusions and feelings of justification and unbelonging were expressed by the Australian Muslims who were interviewed by Cherney and Murphy (as discussed above) who felt the need to reaffirm their identity against that which does *not* define them.

Abdel-Fattah’s analysis on counter-terrorist measures by the Australian government since September 11, 2001 highlights the negative impact of counter-terrorism measures on Muslim youth. Her arguments would have been made more cogent if she provided accounts of the way young Australian Muslims *feel* due to these measures. Her analysis remains largely political, discussing the ways in which the government and policy makers shape the trajectories surrounding Australian Muslim identity and, by extension, Australian Muslim youth identity and their ability (or inability) to belong. Although what Abdel-Fattah discusses in her article has been explored by scholars before her, her study is useful, for it provides a concise and deeply informed understanding on how policies affect the way the Muslim community in Australia are perceived—the youth included. Her study also highlights how “years of policy frameworks, political rhetoric and community partnerships have normalised this hypersensitivity and policing of Muslim youth [which has] tainted [the youth] with an incipient potential to ‘become terrorist’, which is at once dehumanising, unjust, and utterly counter-productive” (Abdel-Fattah 2020, p. 385).

Despite the lack of young Muslim accounts on their thoughts regarding radicalisation and counter-terrorist policies, Abdel-Fattah’s study can be complimented by Melissa Bull and Halim Rane’s study on the very same issue. Bull and Rane interviewed 38 Australian Muslim youth, living in South East Queensland, to gauge their thoughts on political discourses addressing radicalisation and the prevention of it. They found that these Australian Muslim youth believed if there were instances of radicalisation amongst some Australian Muslim youth, it was either the result of:

An individual choice, not a communal issue,
Lack of socio-economic opportunity,
Feelings of isolation from the Muslim community and wider society,
The “us versus them” discourse alienating Muslim youth,
Familial issues,
A diminished sense of belonging,
Lack of appropriate mentorship and guidance by religious leadership,
Lack of adequate knowledge of Islam by community leaders,
The generational gap between elders of the community and Muslim youth, or
Inability to trust leaders—from the community or otherwise. (Bull and Rane 2019, pp. 278–82)

Bull and Rane further explore Muslim youth feelings, asking the sample of Muslim youth to elaborate on their general experience of being a Muslim young person in Australia. A majority of the responses referred to the problem of identity—the trouble of negotiating their cultural, religious, and Australian traditions or expectations (Bull and Rane 2019,

p. 282). Others spoke of the problem of discrimination, of education, of employment. However, most felt that they did not feel any different to other non-Muslim youth as they still had to tackle similar challenges, such as relationships, study, and employment (Bull and Rane 2019, p. 283). Still, while the participants:

saw radicalisation as a problem that was frequently linked to individual circumstance and exacerbated by marginalisation and feelings of alienation ... when they described their own experiences of being young Muslims in Australia, our participants explained that even though they experienced everyday life in positive ways, many of them felt the negative impact of public and political discourses that work to divide the Australian population between non-Muslims or Muslims, or 'us and them'. (Bull and Rane 2019, p. 287)

Bull and Rane's study is one of the very few that explore Muslim youth feelings and experiences, not just in relation to radicalisation but also in relation to their everyday lives as young Australian Muslims.⁴ While they touch on the everyday issues of Australian Muslim youth and provide some positive transformative examples (and could have enriched their analysis with a deeper focus on this issue), their study still provides a refreshing insight into young Muslim thoughts, motivations, experiences, and identity negotiations. Bull and Rane successfully illustrated the complexity of Australian Muslim youth identity and showed how they are not limited by their identity as Muslims and by the negative trajectories that surround their Muslim identity. No, Australian Muslim youth are much more than what policy makers and the media want to believe about them; they are youth, first and foremost, who go through and deal with ordinary youth issues, only with the added pressure of being Muslim in a society that continually dismisses them.

However, Bull and Rane's analysis only captures the thoughts of 38 Muslim youth situated in South East Queensland. Had they expanded their participant sample to include Muslim youth from other Australian states, their study would have been much more enriching and comprehensive in regard to Australian Muslim youth experiences. Bull and Rane's study is also limited to the exploration of the impact on radicalisation on Muslim youth, and thus, while they do present other aspects of youth identity, they do so to show how these youth negotiate themselves in light of the "moral panic" that exists against Muslims by the general Australian public, politicians, and the media, which has shaped Muslim youth feelings of belonging.

The issue of belonging has shaped much literature on Muslim youth. Various scholars focus on how Muslim youth navigate their "multiple identities" in a society that may or may not be fundamentally opposed to their connection to Islam (Kabir 2011; Ozalp and Siddiqui 2012; Jakubowicz et al. 2014). Hamad Hosseini (2013, p. 465) argues that Muslim youth in the West, for example, are not only in a constant struggle with their religious beliefs and Western values but are also in constant negotiation between "multiple sources of identification"—their ethnic backgrounds, class, political beliefs, nationality—and find themselves "placed at the very centre of public debates about the management of national space, where intersecting anxieties over race, crimes and international politics are projected onto them." However, he also argues that while this may be the case, there is a need to move away from "top-down, mainstream approach[es]" to understanding Muslim youth identities in the West—that there is a need to acknowledge "common attributes that make the category of 'Muslim youth' [still] meaningful" (Hosseini 2013, p. 465).

Hosseini's article provides a fruitful alternative understanding to Muslim youth feelings of belonging and agency in the West. He outlines the way Muslim youth negotiate themselves as Muslims living in the West via their political identity and how this perspective allows for an understanding of Muslim youth as "actors with a range of opportunities where they can practice their political agency and respond to their situations in multiple ways" despite their "complex status" resulting from "multiple influential forces and factors" such as marginalisation, unemployment, racism, etc. (Hosseini 2013, p. 469). Despite

⁴ See also (Rane and Bull 2019; Collins et al. 2011).

his alternative approach to understanding Muslim youth identity, Hosseini's article only provides a limited view on Muslim youth engagement in the West. He focuses largely on the notion of political identity, what it means, and how the concept itself can be applied to Muslim youth living in the West. Although he situates political identity away from Islamism and terrorism to show how Muslim youth have an active understanding of Western political processes, his article still aligns itself within the broader theme of terrorism and Muslim youth disengagement from terrorism that is apparent within the existing literature.

Similarly, Scott Poynting (2009) examined the way young Muslim women negotiated their complex identities while living in Australia, but unlike Hosseini, Poynting did not situate his study away from what Hosseini termed "top-down, mainstream approach[es]" (Hosseini 2013, p. 465) to understand young Muslim women and their identities. Instead, Poynting's analysis situates their experiences within the usual hyphenated identity dilemma. Poynting does this by exploring the identity dilemma of five second-generation Lebanese Muslim women over two different periods: two women were interviewed in 1997 and three were interviewed in 2003—making his sample not only extremely limited and selective but also increasingly distant from the realities of young Muslim women's experiences of identity negotiation. Even so, Poynting does explore issues of identity that still remain true today, delving into the concept of "strategic hybridity" to show how young Muslim women incorporate "elements of parents' homeland culture and the 'dominant culture' in creative and quite fluid ways, shifting according to circumstances" (Poynting 2009, p. 375). However, these "creative and fluid ways" are not as Poynting claims. The trajectory still situates itself along the lines of rebellion and integration. These young Muslim women's negotiation of identity places them at odds, according to Poynting, with their parents who feel as if they are rebelling against their culture, while also placing them at odds with the other, "dominant culture", who will not accept them unless they choose to assimilate unconditionally (Poynting 2009, p. 375).

While this issue is one that all Muslim youth face, for Muslim women, their conflict arises with presumptions by others of what it means to be a Muslim living in Australia, and often, these presumptions centre themselves around their appearance—whether or not they wear the head covering (which, again, is an aspect that is constantly scrutinised by existing literature when it comes to Muslim women). However, the women who were interviewed in 2003 by Poynting, unlike the 1997 sample, felt a stronger connection to their Muslim identity, considering the head covering as a symbolic gesture, something that represents who they are as well as their Muslim identity. As one interviewee said,

If you're going to respect me, and accept me, then I want you to accept me on my terms, and that is as a Muslim. So, I deliberately created this position of difference, so that people would, hopefully, ultimately respect me for that, and not for something else, not for just being a woman, but for being Muslim as well. (Poynting 2009, p. 383)

Despite these personalised negotiations of identity, one where these Muslim women try to shift the focus on how the "other" perceives them to how *they wish to be perceived*, their identity as Muslim women is still focused on them needing to define themselves based on their dress. Moreover, while the article discusses potent issues that are relevant to the experiences of Muslim women in Australia today, the sample is very small and thus does not show a large example of how young Australian Muslim women negotiate their identities. The article also falls short of examining some of the adolescent experiences of these young women, to delve into how they explore their identity in different aspects of their lives.

Some literature on Australian Muslim youth has placed a focus on the negative perceptions of Muslim youth and their perceived radicalisation or unwillingness to integrate

into Australian society because of their religious affiliation with Islam.⁵ Other scholars have argued otherwise. Looking at the effects of Islamophobia on Muslims living in the West, Dunn and Hopkins (2016, p. 257) write that even though “it has been asserted [by the media and/or public policy] that the disaffection borne of Islamophobia could generate violent extremism” among Muslims and particularly Muslim youth, there is no evidence that establishes “an empirical link between disaffection borne of Islamophobia [for example] and a vulnerability to violent extremism”.⁶ If there was a correlation, the percentage would undoubtedly be marginal, especially as the Australian Muslim community holds a minority status within Australia; the demographic profile of Muslim youth under the age of twenty-five makes up 50% of the 604,000 Muslims living in Australia.⁷

Some studies show that many Muslim youth in the West, and in Australia specifically, feel a sense of connection to their respective Western countries. In one study conducted by Nahid Afrose Kabir (2011), the majority of Australian Muslims living in Melbourne, when responding to the question of what it means to be Australian and un-Australian, said that to be Australian is to respect the law and to be un-Australian is to disobey the law (Kabir 2011). While this shows that Muslims pay attention to being a law-abiding citizen, limiting being Australian to obeying laws indicates an exclusion of social and religious aspects of a person’s national identity as Australian. This may be reflective of the Muslim sentiments of not feeling to belong and looking for the most common denominator, obeying laws, as being Australian. It could also suggest that Muslim youth are not sure what it means to be Australian and how Australianness reflects on their identity. Nevertheless, Kabir contends that most Muslims felt a strong affiliation with their Australian identity but did not disconnect themselves from their roots, preferring to adopt hyphenated identities. They also see Australia as an inclusive nation, and any discontent with minority groups by Australians themselves largely stems of media misrepresentations of those groups, such as, in this case, Muslims (Kabir 2011).

Kabir offers an insider perspective on Muslim youth feelings of what it means to be a Muslim living in the West and provides insight into how Muslim youth in Australia do not feel disconnected to Australia and Australian values. The discussion allows for an understanding on Muslim youth feelings of inclusion and how they navigate their multiple identities in a society that sees them, more or less, as disengaged individuals who pose a threat to the Western way of life (Kabir 2011).⁸ Had Kabir focused on the way these Australian Muslim individuals used their unique sense of identity as Australian Muslims to become successful citizens engaged in positive action, her analysis would have provided fresh insight on literature on Muslim youth that moves away from current discourse on Muslim youth as disengaged citizens with disengaged identities. While Kabir’s article is valuable as a source on Muslim youth for she provides primary accounts from Muslim youth themselves, and more importantly, on Australian Muslim youth, the number of respondents is quite low—with only fourteen Muslim youth interviewed—and her focus remains on Muslim youth in Melbourne, and therefore, it does not capture a wider demographic on Australian Muslim youth feelings of belonging, such as those living in other city states.

Kabir also wrote an article on Muslim youth three years prior to the above study, where she examined perspectives of Old Muslim Australians (aged between sixty and

⁵ Although not focused on Muslim youth’s unwillingness to integrate into Australian society, Johns et al. analyse how a sport-focused youth mentoring program in Melbourne was developed as a form of “community-based resilience” to tackle issues of identity, belonging, and cultural isolation and counter “forms of violent extremism” that might be present in some Muslim youth. See (Johns et al. 2014).

⁶ See also (Carr and Haynes 2015).

⁷ (Phillips 2007).

⁸ Rane et al. explores the way Australian Muslims, in general, interact with Australian society amid negative public and media discourse towards them. Although their study is limited to just the views and opinions of the Queensland Muslim community at the 2009 Muslim Eid Festival in Brisbane, their discussion shows Australian Muslim willingness to *positively* interact with, and integrate into, Australian society—much like the responses indicated from Kabir’s study. See (Rane et al. 2010). Ryan J. Al-Natour also offers an interesting perspective on how negative perceptions towards Sydney’s ‘Muslim ghettos’ contributed to protests over the building of an Islamic school in Camden because Muslims had “no place in Camden” in the eyes of white Australian protesters. See (Al-Natour 2015).

ninety years old), New Muslim Australians (ages between twenty to seventy years old), and Australian Muslim Youth (aged between fifteen and eighteen years old) from Sydney and Perth. Unlike her later study, Kabir found that young Muslims in Australia felt a stronger affiliation with their ethnic identity rather than their identity as Australians. Of the sixty students interviewed (a much larger sample than the above study), thirty-eight from Sydney said their national identity was their parent's country of origin, while twenty-two from Perth said the same. Only one youth from Sydney strongly identified as Australian, while one from Perth strongly identified with the Muslim nation (Kabir 2008). What Kabir's study revealed, despite it being more than ten years old, is that youth who felt a sense of belonging to Australia did so based on their active citizenship and engagement with Australian society through sporting activities, music, the workplace, inter-school debates, etc. Being exposed to different aspects of Australian society allowed these young Muslims to feel a sense of connection to Australia and thus develop a sense of Australian-ness that other Muslim youth did not identify with because of their conflicted loyalties. Kabir's article highlights what the majority of the current literature fails to do—Muslim youth are varied in their experiences and their personal beliefs, and so their sense of belonging and identity is not only about fitting in within their culture or religious expectations but also about negotiating who they think they are and how they believe they belong.

However, in the post-September 11 climate, no matter how much Muslim youth perceive themselves as belonging to a society that is majorly non-Muslim, they live in a period of "political mis-recognition" (Lam and Mansouri 2020), where there is a "conceptual blindness to the complexities of Muslim identities, aspirations, and civic and political engagement . . . it manifests as a failure to recognise the rights of Muslims within prevailing structures of diversity governance, and the resultant burden placed on Muslims to attain state recognition and social acceptance for their religious needs" (Lam and Mansouri 2020). Through their interviews of forty-nine young Australian Muslims living in Melbourne, Kim Lam and Fethi Mansouri found that a majority of these Muslim youth turned to faith as a form of not only coping with mis-recognition but also fighting back against notions of their incompatibility with Western society: "the notion of using Islamic teachings and practices to facilitate adaptation and social integration into a Western culture challenges the Islam–West cultural incompatibility thesis and indeed speaks to a desire for re-engagement with Western polity, rather than a desire to carve out an alternative space for oneself" (Lam and Mansouri 2020). Their methods of coping or of "fighting back" varied; some youth delved deep into their faith in a way where their faith intertwined with their civic engagement with mainstream society, others used faith as a means of solace outside of Western culture (Lam and Mansouri 2020).

Either way, Lam and Mansouri highlighted the ways in which the complex identities of these young Australian Muslims were negotiated in a climate of political misrecognition of such identities and showed how young Australian Muslims are not bound by Western trajectories of who they are, and how and where they belong, rather, young Muslims are empowered agents who forge their own stories. Lam and Mansouri's study is one of the very few that delve deep into current literature on Muslim youth to offer an informed understanding of their agency rather than their subjugation to Western trajectories. Having said that, their study does have its limitations. Their sample is small and restricted to Muslim youth in Melbourne, and their focus still lies within the broader framework of terror and at-risk youth as they present Muslim youth accounts on the way they negotiate their identities around the political climate of misrecognition.

To understand more thoroughly the way Muslim youth negotiate their "multiple" or "hyphenated" identities in the West, a focus on their educational aspirations and their subsequent cultural and ethnic make-up is needed—Fethi Mansouri and Sally Percival Wood do exactly this in their book *Identity, Education and Belonging: Arab and Muslim Youth in Contemporary Australia*. Although the book was published in 2008 and focuses only on immigrant Arab Muslim youth living in Australia, the themes explored throughout offer an interesting perspective on how Muslim youth may or may not use other avenues, such

as education and schooling, to negotiate their identities. The book provides a thorough historical overview on the relationship between Muslims and Australians prior to September 11 and situates the discussion on how the subsequent war on terror directly impacted Arab Muslim youth aspirations and schooling abilities in Australia. However, what makes their discussion fruitful is the exploration of culture, cultural diversity, and cultural identity among youth and how . . .

First- and second-generation migrant youth negotiate their cultural identity in the private spaces of family networks and in the public sphere where ethnic, gendered and racial perceptions interact to shape social and behavioural outcomes. (Mansouri and Wood 2008, p. 32)

Situating their argument within the theoretical framework of cultural identity constructions, the authors show how Muslim youth identity formations are not just restricted to “choosing” or “battling” with who they are from a religious or nationalistic perspective (Mansouri and Wood 2008, p. 32). They show that there are various factors outside of the political and religious identifications that influence how Muslim youth navigate themselves in the West. While their study was heavily reliant on the effect terrorism discourse had on the way immigrant Arab Muslim youth excelled in school, the overall background they provide does offer a broader understanding of how Muslim youth, even today, battle with discourse on their faith and identities.

What is also significant about Mansouri and Wood’s publication is that by looking into various other factors that inform youth identity formations, such as those influenced by culture and cultural practices, we can better understand how Muslim youth express themselves, interact with others and society, and how they choose to become active citizens engaged in positive action. The binary approach between religious and nationalistic identifications restricts any real understanding of the multiple factors that may shape not only Muslim youth identities but also the decisions they make in everyday life and their participation in wider society. While Mansouri and Wood’s 2008 publication sheds light on these important insights, there is a need to research Australian Muslim youth to see how they evolved in the last decade especially with respect to the impact of increased scrutiny on Muslim youth since the emergence of ISIS in 2014 and their social media campaign to recruit Muslims around the world.

Bindi Shah et al. (2010) also focus on educational achievement to examine how education influences the career aspirations of Muslim youth. However, their focus is limited to British Pakistanis and Pierre Bourdieu’s theory on family capital. Their aim is to explore “familial or ethnic shared norms and values as contributing to educational achievement among immigrant groups” and how social class positions intersect with ethnicity (Shah et al. 2010, p. 119). Given that Muslim youth are a diverse group with varying ethnic, national, and cultural backgrounds, Shah et al.’s study, much like Mansouri and Wood, unpacks the complexities of not only what it means to be a young Muslim living in the West but also of the multitude of factors that helps shape their identities beyond political and religious factors.

Amanda Keddie (2017) also examines education amongst Muslim youth, but her study is focused on the way young Muslim women explore issues of education, identity, and justice against the backdrop of Islamophobia and whiteness in Australian society. The book, *Supporting and Educating Young Muslim Women: Stories from Australia and the UK*, draws on case study research over a period of ten years and, as a result, presents a wide range of young Muslim women’s perspectives on education and identity within Australia and the UK. What is unique about Keddie’s study is that she looks into the way these young Muslim women use education as a means of agency and empowerment, and how, despite certain experiences of discrimination and racism, these women still strive to pursue their educational aspirations. Similar to Mansouri and Wood as well as Shah et al., Keddie’s article situates the experiences of these young Muslim women away from the binary of faith versus culture. Through her case study, she shows how these young Muslim women are not restricted in their choices but rather find support from their family,

friends, and educators. Keddie's study is also very useful to understand how the impacts of Islamophobia can be mitigated through something as simple as education.

Keddie's study greatly compliments a smaller albeit similar study done by Taghreed Jamal Al-deen who examined the way young Muslim women in Australia developed a sense of agency by pursuing higher education (2019). However, unlike Keddie's study, Al-deen's solely focusses on young Australian Muslim women and moves her analysis away from the preoccupation on Muslim women's dress codes and other misconceived topics about women in Islam. Al-deen found that second-generation Muslim women had the desire to socially and economically advance themselves unlike their first-generation mothers, which did cause an inter-generational rift between the two. Even so, these young Muslim women still received significant support from their families to pursue higher education, regardless of their social and economic status. Al-deen also found that the pursuit of higher education brought these young Muslim women closer to their faith identity while also challenging incorrect cultural beliefs, with most using "Islam as a sense of agency and a tool for the promotion of the rights of women" (Al-deen 2019, p. 606).

Despite her relatively small sample (only twelve women were interviewed) and despite it not being a representation of young Muslim women in Australia or other Western countries, Al-deen's study highlights Muslim women's agency in action—something that very few existing studies in the literature explore, especially when examining young Muslim women's experiences. In fact, previous studies on the topic of Muslim women's education were divided: one study, for example, found that some academically successful Muslim women moved away from their faith while others gained confidence in their faith and in their culture (Bhopal 1998). Still, these previous studies are not reflective of young Muslim women today who have ample more opportunities and freedoms, and so Al-deen's focus brings this aspect of Muslim women's identity and agency through education to the present day. As such, both Keddie and Al-deen's studies provide insight into the way Muslim women develop agency as young Muslims through education—not as a means of challenging their faith or cultural identities, but because of their desire to advance themselves socially and economically within the Australian and English contexts.

Although not analysing Muslim women in education, Rebecca Meldrum et al. (2014) explore how eleven young Muslim women develop agency in the way they understand sexuality, be it from a culturally or faith-based perspective. The young Australian women who were interviewed for this study were from Melbourne. Their understandings of sexuality differed considerably: some saw sexuality as something deeply sacred, others saw it as something that differentiates them from men, explaining why men and women have different roles as a result (Meldrum et al. 2014). Others saw sexuality as something that needs to be protected through the hijab, considering it to be a blessing as it hinders men from prying on them and safeguards them from potential instances of rape (Meldrum et al. 2014, p. 173). Most expressed the inequality within the Muslim community toward men and women, where men are allowed to freely express their sexuality while women are forced to control it (Meldrum et al. 2014, p. 174). Regardless, the authors found that the young Muslim women felt comfortable in the way they express or do not express their sexuality, despite cultural and religious expectations. While the authors did focus on the dichotomy of culture and religion as the basis of their study, they present the ways in which these young Muslim women navigate their lives as exactly that: young Muslim women. They show how, despite their cultural and religious upbringing, young Muslim women are able to form their own perspectives on what it means to be a Muslim woman living in Australia.⁹

Prior to Meldrum's study—some seven years—Muslim women's sexuality was perceived by the Australian public as something that was restrained and "un-feminist" without regard to the way Muslim women actually perceived their sexuality. These remarks were shaped by the events of 2001—the Sydney Gang Rapes—and of 2005—the Cronulla Riots—

⁹ See also (Meldrum et al. 2016).

a period where great suspicion and racist attitudes toward those of Lebanese or Middle Eastern backgrounds were at a high. Kiran Grewal found that Australian public discourse at the time framed the Muslim man as a “threat” to the Muslim woman and, indeed, the non-Muslim woman. Muslim women’s sexuality was seen as being “inferior” by their faith as a consequence of the 2001 and 2005 incidents, and Muslim men were thus condemned for their inability to respect the rights of Muslim women. Grewal found that during this period, anti-racist and anti-feminist discourses pitted against each other, whereby “the selective use of the language of ‘women’s rights’ and gendered nationalist imagery, far from demonstrating a newfound popular feminism in Australia, reflects the highly gendered, sexualised and ethicised construction of Australian national identity” (Grewal 2007, p. 131).

Grewal provided an overview on how discourses on gender, ethnicity, and nationalism in Australia at the time of the Sydney gang rapes and the Cronulla riots were shaped around the “other”—namely, the Muslim male and the oppressed Muslim female. While his study shows how the trajectory on Muslims in Australia is much the same then as it is now, albeit with a deeper focus on radicalisation today, he does not provide insight in Muslim youth experiences of such trajectories during the time such incidents occurred. His study generalises the Australian public feelings toward Australian Muslims in light of such incidents, citing a variety of media sources and political commentaries made by political parties at the time. Although rich in analysis on the way the public perceived Australian Muslims immediately post-September 11, Kiran’s study remains limited and does not offer an understanding of how the Muslim community, in general, felt about the skewed gendered, racist, and nationalist attitudes of the wider Australian public at the time, thus limiting his study to a pure examination of media reports and political commentaries.

Writing around the same time as Kiran Grewal, Alia Imtoul discusses the implications of racism on young Muslim women in South Australia. Dismissing the term Islamophobia due to its “theoretical underpinnings” that “appear to be a return to the ‘prejudice thesis’ whereby racism/discrimination is located as a problem within misguided or ‘ignorant’ individuals”, Imatoual offers an alternative definition: religious racism (Imtoul 2006, p. 192). Religious racism “covers not only individualised attitudes and actions, but also acts of disadvantage or discrimination, as well as structural and societal codes that act to advantage some and disadvantage others” and “refers only to these factors where they are associated with religious affiliation” (Imtoul 2006, p. 193). With this definition, Imatoual interviewed young South Australian Muslim women about their “identity formations, what role they saw religion as playing in Australian society, their perceptions of media representations of Muslims and Islam, as well as how they experience life as a Muslim in a majority non-Muslim country”, with a large part of her discussions focusing on religious racism. She found that many of these women experienced instances of religious racism in their everyday lives, and at the time in South Australia, no laws had been introduced that protected them from religious racism. Imtoul’s analysis does not offer any new insight on the experiences of Australian Muslim youth, aside from her alternative understanding on religious racism—a term that, while comprehensive, does not negate the now more broader meaning of Islamophobia, including its effects on Muslims who experience it directly or indirectly. The article focuses largely on unpacking definitions and identifying gaps in legislature. Her focus on Muslim women’s experiences was minimal.

The next section will show how Australian Muslim youth—and Muslim youth in general—use their faith to engage in civic practices in Australia. As noted previously, studies on American Christian youth have shown that there is a strong correlation between religious identity and civic engagement. Similar correlations would be expected with Muslim youth.

4. Islamic Activism and Civic Engagement

Questions about young Muslims and their civic engagement continues to shape much political and scholarly discourse often based around the assumption that “Islam constrains the full possibilities of citizenship in multicultural secular societies and that

Muslims must be actively steered towards participation in civic life” (Roose and Harris 2015, p. 468). Joshua M. Roose and Anita Harris argue that despite their tenuous sense of belonging and awareness of negative political and public attitudes towards Muslims, Australian Muslim youth take advantage of opportunities to engage with others in society. According to their findings, religion was identified as the “key shaper of the everyday civic activities”, with Islam contributing “strongly to the development of civic mindedness” in Australian Muslim youth (Roose and Harris 2015, p. 463). What their findings indicate is that religion plays a strong role in Muslim youth civic engagement despite arguments that suggest otherwise.¹⁰ They write that understanding civic engagement cannot be limited to traditional civic practices; instead, there is a need to understand how Australian Muslim youth refer to alternative means of civic practice to showcase active participation in society and how religion informs those practices (Roose and Harris 2015). One of the merits of their study is that they not only provide a comprehensive background discussion of current literature but also rely on accounts from eighty Muslim youth in Australia to inform their perspective—although their sample is only limited to Muslim youth from migrant backgrounds.

Muslim youth do engage in civic practices, but most do so through online platforms, according to Amelia Johns (2014) and her study on Muslim young people’s active citizenship online. In her study, Johns found that new online platforms and social media provide Muslim youth with new opportunities to take civic engagement and collective agency. These online platforms play a crucial role for Muslim youth to express their voice and communicate their concerns on citizenship, rights, and how they see the issues regarding the Muslim community in Australia. Similar to Roose and Harris, Johns shows that civic engagement does not necessarily need to be oriented toward formal political membership and participation. Instead, civic engagement means any form of activity oriented toward the “public good” (Johns 2014, p. 73).¹¹ For Muslim youth, this might mean using online platforms as an “alternative discursive space” where they feel safe and free to assert both their religious and cultural identities as well as engage in democratic dialogue “beyond frequently hostile mainstream media portrayals of their communities” (Johns 2014, p. 76). While this study was very useful, the focus on increased activity online tends to overshadow volunteering and involvement in the traditional organisations that are still very active in large metropolitan cities in Australia.

Online platforms as “alternative discursive spaces” have most certainly been an outlet for some Muslim youth who want to engage with the wider public about their faith. In their study on the impact of online video platforms, Vika Gardner and Salman Hameed (Gardner and Hameed 2018) found that one particular Muslim youth, Kamal Saleh, uses his talent as a “spoken word” artist to make videos online about Islam and science to “frame [his] discourse in ways that unify rather than divide”. One of Kamal Saleh’s most popular videos on the topic of Islam and science, titled “The Meaning of Life”, has attracted over 3 million views on YouTube. The authors found that young Muslims such as Kamal Saleh attempt to bring to light “voices of ordinary people”, especially in debates on faith, that are often pushed aside by more seasoned scholars such as Zakir Naik and Hamza Tzortzis (Gardner and Hameed 2018). Instead of delivering understandings of faith in the more traditional, sermon manner, Kamal Saleh—influenced by the aforementioned scholars—attempts to “engage in acts of cultural production” (Gardner and Hameed 2018). What this means, according to Gardner and Hameed, is that Muslim youth are turning to online platforms to “actively shap[e] local and transnational cultures, rather than merely being acted upon by traditional media”—that is, Muslim youth use online platforms as a means to have their voices heard and, by extension, participate in civic activities even if behind a screen (Gardner and Hameed 2018, p. 61).

¹⁰ See also (Norton 2013; Joppke 2013; Noble 2009).

¹¹ See also (Collin 2008; Harris et al. 2010; Bennett et al. 2011; Vromen 2011).

Despite their unique study, one that traces the way Muslim youth create “youth cultures” online through creative mediums such as videos, Gardner and Hameed’s study does not trace the patterns of Muslim youth engagement online more broadly to show a correlation between active online engagement and the creation of youth cultures. Their study is also limited to Saleh—one individual—and the study of two of his popular spoken word videos, “The Meaning of Life” and “Embryo = Leech”, with a brief discussion on the influence of other scholars on Saleh’s work. Gardner and Hameed do not provide Saleh’s personal statements about his intentions and can only speculate about Saleh’s intentions and rise to prominence in an online space.

Examining the correlation between Islamic religiosity and civic engagement of young Muslims in Melbourne, Matteo Vergani et al. (2017) found that organised grassroots civic engagement initiatives allowed Australian Muslim youth to feel as though they were active citizens rather than members of traditional organisations. They found that the main barrier to Muslim active political participation was a lack of trust in public institutions and the negative discourse promoted by “divisive forces” (Vergani et al. 2017, p. 63). For some young Muslims, the political system and therefore political participation does not allow for their voices to be heard, especially in a post-9/11 climate, and they believe that formal means of civic engagement do nothing but divide the local and political communities (Vergani et al. 2017, p. 70). The impact of this on Australian Muslim youth was an ambivalence in political participation. Ultimately, Vergani et al. argue that there is a need to see how Islamic religiosity influences civic engagement, and their analysis, although attempting to bridge this gap in the current literature, only offers a window into the relationship of religion and civic engagement among Australian Muslim youth. However, they do note that while studies on Australian Muslim youth and their civic engagement have been limited, other studies have shown a strong correlation between religion and civic engagement among youth from other faiths and backgrounds—studies that have helped inform their research on Australian Muslim youth.¹²

Although very few studies have shown a positive correlation between religious practices and civic engagement in Australia (Dunn et al. 2015), there have been some studies, such as that conducted by Ameera Karimshah et al., who have shown that religious associations—i.e., mosques—may lead to deeper civic engagement and social participation in the wider society among Australian Muslim youth. Indeed, building on the work of A. Dialmy (2007) and A. Jamal (2005), Karimshah et al. (2014, p. 38) write that contrary to popular public perception, “the role of the mosque in the lives of Muslim youth is multifaceted and serves as the centrepiece from which the majority of socialisation, across [a] variety [of] formal and informal networks, occurs.” The mosque is also a place whereby young Australian Muslims can feel at ease with their Muslim identity through socialisation, where they can facilitate and form friendship networks, and where they can actively participate in a number of formal activities, such as youth groups, advocacy groups, charities, and women’s groups (Karimshah et al. 2014). The authors also found that the mosque not only plays a role in Australian Muslim youth religious engagement, but it also encourages Muslim youth to join networks in non-religious settings (Karimshah et al. 2014).

However, their study is limited to a few interviews conducted with only a small sample of Australian Muslim youth from Brisbane, three of whom were born in Australia, and the other eight had been living in Australia for more than eight years (Karimshah et al. 2014). What this shows is that there is still a focus on Australian Muslim immigrant youth, whose experiences may differ drastically to those Muslim youth who were born in Australia. Moreover, although Karimshah et al. showed how mosques play a pivotal role in Muslim youth civic engagement, there is a need to consider that these positive outcomes depend on the leadership of the mosque and its resources, as the majority of existing Australian mosques do not have the ability or the means to provide a social civic space for their Muslim youth. Even so, the model of mosques as complexes meeting a

¹² See (Yeung 2004; Kabir 2005; Kniss and Numrich 2007; Read 2015).

variety of needs (including gyms and cafes) is increasing, with large mosque complex projects across large metropolitan cities in Australia.

Outside of the mosque, young Australian Muslims still find ways to not only make sense of who they are with their networking and socialisation opportunities but also how they can use their faith to exercise civic engagement practices. Chole Patton (2014), in her study on young Australian Muslims, their citizenship, and their religiosity post September 11, found that religion plays a pivotal role in Australian Muslim youth in charting a narrative for a more ethical and just society in Australia. This narrative is not a vision to impose Islamic law onto Australian society; rather, “a battle to de-centre the cultural hegemony of Anglo-Australian identities” (Patton 2014, p. 119). What is meant here is that Australian Muslim youth dream of a more culturally egalitarian society. In fact, many expressed unwillingness to label Australia as a “racist or Islamophobic” society—for them, racial or Islamophobic discrimination is a “form of social deviance” (Patton 2014, p. 118). What Patton evidently found was that Muslim youth in Australia approach their Australian citizenship in similar terms as they approach their religiosity: “as a process of becoming” (Patton 2014, p. 120). Although the study is based on two Melbourne Shia Muslim youth groups, a majority of whom were recent immigrants, the study does show that an Islam plays an empowering role in giving young Muslims clarity of identity and the confidence to undertake civic engagement practices despite signs of racism and Islamophobia.

It should be noted that the correlation between religion and civic engagement is not always apparent. General youth programs that assist youth with becoming civically engaged citizens are avenues by which these youth can express themselves outside of their religion and/or religious identity. These programs are especially important for Muslim youth who do not have a strong connection to their faith and who do not have opportunity to engage in civic activities via their faith in meaningful, practical, and contributable ways. For instance, Mary E. Arnold et al. (2012) found that there are eight main domains of youth engagement: (1) Youth service: volunteerism, community service, and service learning; (2) Youth leadership; (3) Youth decision-making: youth in governance; (4) Youth philanthropy; (5) Youth political engagement; (6) Youth organising: community organising and advocacy; (7) Youth media; and (8) Youth evaluation and research in systematic inquiry into issues that affect them and their communities (p. 57). Identifying the various programs and ways in which youth can become civically engaged allows for a better understanding of how youth may reach out to their communities and the broader society in general. For Muslim youth, this may mean finding a suitable platform where they may be able to not only express their identity as Muslims through various civic practices but also how they may incorporate their faith into their daily lives or re-connect with it.

Arnold et al. (2012) also found that youth–adult partnerships are an important key for success in community youth engagement, as youth do not always have the resources, experience, and means for successful civic action. What this means is that in order for youth to successfully engage, they need to acknowledge that they may need some assistance to make meaningful contributions to society. However, likewise, adults also need to acknowledge that youth play an important role in society and need a platform to voice their opinions, concerns, and in some cases, their identities. Arnold et al. argue that for this to be possible, youth and adults need to undertake “training”, where they participate in activities designed to help them work together as “teams”. While youth may see adults as being “too rigid” or “old-fashioned” and the adults may likewise see youth as being “overcommitted” and “impractical”, these training activities will help them “explore the nuances of working together, assessing differences and similarities, and exposing potential problems, such as adultism (adult bias against children)” (Arnold et al. 2012, pp. 60–61). Arnold et al.’s study is important, especially when it comes to understanding Muslim youth and their relationship with community leaders. Studies have found that many Muslim youth, especially in Australia, feel that there is a disconnect between them and the older generation of leaders in their community. Then, this leads to disenfranchisement with not only their community but also their faith, as many begin to

feel isolated, misunderstood, voiceless, and judged—all while not having the means to understand how to better themselves.

The disconnect between youth and their community leaders is not unique to Australian Muslim youth and their experiences with their community. In fact, many youth in Australia feel there is a mismatch between what they see as important in youth leadership development programs and what their teachers and other stakeholders find essential. Nathan Eva and Sen Sendjaya (Eva and Sendjaya 2013) found that youth, especially students, prioritised transforming influence and voluntary subordination over ethics and morality, and they placed priority on cultivating profound, genuine, and trusting relationships as well as championing authentic and secure individuals—matters their teachers and facilitators saw as the least important aspects of leadership training. One student expressed that she felt she excelled when she “needed to be a leader and make important decisions”, but when she was a bystander, she felt she tended to become “lazy and unmotivated” (Eva and Sendjaya 2013, p. 592). What her response shows, and Eva and Sendjaya’s study suggests overall, is that youth will most likely only engage in civic activities if they feel like they can make a meaningful contribution to their society or community and they are empowered to take leadership roles and given real responsibilities. Hence, leadership development programs and adult–youth relationships are essential in cultivating active citizens, especially within youth communities, regardless of their faith and cultural identities.

Indeed, Paulina Billet (2014) contends that all bonding networks, whether based on social capital or not, deliver youth essential access to resources and relationships for them to cope with the complexities of life and to help them become actively engaged in civic activities. She writes that bonding ties are “an essential part of [youth] identity forming and can be linked to their resilience, with youth of disadvantaged backgrounds often making use of their strong bonding to make their lives work” (p. 848). While certain bonding networks may facilitate negative outcomes, such as creating deviant youth and leading to high crime rates, they still teach youth essential skills that may help them later in their lives, especially as youth rely on their experiences to determine what course they want to take in life and how they may use these experiences—if negative—to positively transform their lives. For some youth, friendship bonding networks “represent[ed] a family of sorts, which can be relied upon in times of need”, especially when youth feel as though they are misunderstood by their family members or local community who cannot relate to their immediate problems (Billet 2014, p. 850). Billet ultimately argues that there is a need to:

... understand the differences between youth and adult social capital in order to minimise misconceptions and promote understanding, strive to better comprehend the impacts of bonding and bridging during youth and conceptualise social capital not in terms of perverse or dark, but as a resource of the individual which can be used in order to reach desired aims. (Billet 2014, p. 855)

While Billet’s study covered general youth, its findings are relevant for Muslim youth as they are having issues of belonging to wider society and even their own community. For positive civic engagement of Muslim youth, formations of bonding networks need to be explored and understood, particularly as not all Muslim youth find strong connections with their faith or the local Muslim community. Certain bonding networks, whether based on social capital or not, help navigate their lives and teach them valuable lessons that may help them positively transform.

One way that youth find “bonding networks” is through popular culture as explored in Kamaludeen Mohamed Nasir’s book *Globalised Muslim Youth in the Asia Pacific: Popular Culture in Singapore and Sydney* (Nasir 2016). One of the outstanding things about this book is the way Nasir skilfully incorporates a variety of sources to present a compelling argument, weaving together data from cyberspace social networking websites, textual sources, and interviews to produce a comparative transnational study on Muslim youth involvement in a variety of popular culture practices, including tattooing, hip-hop, and cultural consumption. Through these avenues, which cause the blending of popular culture

with religion, Nasir notes that Muslim youth are able to become custodians of religion, reinterpreting their faith in a way that helps them understand who they are and where they belong (Nasir 2016). What makes Nasir's study refreshing is his approach on Muslim youth not as youth who are in conflict with their identity or in trouble of becoming radicalised but rather as youth who are negotiating their identity amidst an increasingly globalised world, where they become the masters of who they are—not their culture, not their faith. He also provides a perspective on Muslim youth as *youth* who know how to actively engage in society through their own means. Even so, Nasir's analysis lacks some development and, in some cases, requires clarification, especially regarding the way Muslim youth use tattoos as a form of reinterpretation of faith. He also does not make it clear on what he considers to be the "danger" of Muslim youth who turn to online sources for religious knowledge, except to say that these platforms may further entrench preconceived notions youth have regarding their beliefs. Despite its limitations, this study is one of the very few that considers youth in light of their identity as, simply, *youth* who are finding their place within popular culture that is not heavily influenced by their religion or their ethnic backgrounds and cultures.

Despite the fact that there is literature available on religiosity and Australian Muslim youth civic engagement, the literature is scarce and tends to rely on comparative examples from youth in other countries, such as the United States, to understand potential Australian Muslim youth motivations.

5. Muslim Youth as Active Citizens

Section 4 focused on literature covering Muslim youth's Islamic activism and civic engagement, that is, how they attempt to address matters of public concern stemming from their place in society as Muslims. This section focusses on Muslim youth as active citizens, that is, how they get involved with their local community and the extent of their involvement. Although active citizenship may produce outcomes one would expect from civic engagement, the main purpose of involvement in active citizenship is not to address matters of public concern but to participate in community as individuals and contribute to social capital. Very few studies in the literature focus on Muslim youth active citizenship, for the bulk of literature is heavily focussed on Muslim youth disengaged identities and the impact of terrorism on Muslim youth civic engagement and action—as highlighted in the previous two sections.

That is not to say there has not been any attempt to address the research gap on Muslim youth as active citizens. Thea Renda Abu El-Haj and Sally Wesley Bonet (Abu El-Haj and Bonet 2011) offer a fruitful perspective on how Muslim youth in America, from transnational communities, use education and the politics of belonging in the post-September 11 world to become active citizens in the West. Their discussion provides an example of how two siblings, although initially hesitant about their identity as ethnic minority Muslims in the West, began to "approach these identities [Palestinian, American, and Muslim] in new ways" to "fashion forms of cultural, civic, and political participation" (Abu El-Haj and Bonet 2011, p. 30). Embracing their Palestinian origins, they used their active citizenship to raise awareness on the war in Palestine and their Palestinian identity while also consciously working to "challenge and reshape U.S. culture and politics" by asserting their identity as Americans (Abu El-Haj and Bonet 2011, p. 31). Although it may seem that Abu El-Haj and Bonet focus on how Muslim youth negotiate their religious and ethnic identities—as existing literature on Muslim youth has tended to do—they instead shift the focus of research from youth identities to show "how [youth] social identities are intimately bound up with questions of citizenship" in a way that places the focus more on youth self-activity and agency rather than as a response to factors that force them into active citizenship (Abu El-Haj and Bonet 2011, p. 32).

What makes Abu El-Haj and Bonet's analysis unique is their approach to understanding Muslim youth' active citizenship. They frame their research outside of Muslim and hyphenated-Muslim identity—and away from disengaged identities—in order to consider

the experiences of Muslim youth who may have chosen “nonreligious responses to the context of the war on terror”, such as how Muslim youth have responded to changing perceptions of them through adolescent activities and methods that illustrate active citizenship rather than placing a focus on issues of belonging and non-belonging as a result of their minority status and Muslim identity (Abu El-Haj and Bonet 2011, pp. 41–42). Through their review of the literature, they offer suggestions on what is needed to address the current gap on literature on Muslim youth—namely, there is a need to focus on how Muslim youth reshape discourses about themselves in the post-September 11 climate, and how they “position themselves, produce cultural forms, [and] engage in civic action . . .” through positive transformations, or positive engagement and civic action (Abu El-Haj and Bonet 2011, p. 54). Although their analysis of the literature limits itself to American Muslim youth despite examining youth transnational identities and is limited to literature before 2010, their analysis provides an opportunity for future Australian research to offer a new perspective by focusing on Muslim youth positive engagement.

On Muslims as active citizens in Australia, Mario Peucker et al. (2014) have shown that although the Muslim community in Australia faces several disadvantages because of their minority status—such as economic hardship hindering their civic and political activism—there is a growing number of Australian Muslims, particularly Australian Muslim youth, who are “economically well-established, educated and articulate, eager to participate in and contribute to society at large, individually or through Muslim community engagement or mainstream organisations” (p. 295). Indeed, the executive director of the Australian Multicultural Foundation stated that he has encountered “a great proportion of young Australian Muslims who are really getting out there and participate and have become quite successful in media, political parties, local councils, and a whole range of other activities” (Peucker et al. 2014, pp. 295–96). Peucker et al. (2014) note that active citizenship increased dramatically post-September 11, with a majority of Australian Muslims engaging in interfaith initiatives, the media, and government consultations. They support their conclusions by examining 2001, 2006, and 2011 Australian census data to show that Australian Muslim youth are more actively engaged than their older counterparts in finding ways to become active citizens despite the growing terrorism and radicalisation discourse.¹³ While Peucker et al. do not provide any accounts from the Muslim youth themselves, or from the Muslim community, their analysis can prove useful when contrasted with other literature, such as Joshua M. Roose’s analysis of young Muslims in Australia and their multicultural success stories as a result of their membership with the Young Muslims Australia (YMA).

Roose argues that in a time of widespread social exclusion, YMA was “the most effective contributor to the development of Australian multiculturalism and Islam in the nation, and possibly across Western multicultural contexts.” (Roose 2012, p. 152) This was because YMA aimed to create a space where Australian Muslim youth felt in touch with their Islamic identity while encouraging them to be active citizens engaged in positive action. Indeed, since being a member of YMA, one Australian Muslim youth, Sherene Hassan, has become “one of the most visible public faces of Muslim women in Australia”, having been the Vice President and Secretary of the Islamic Council of Victoria and the former President of the Jewish-Christian-Muslim Association (Roose 2012, p. 153). There’s also Tasneem Chopra, who is well known for “improving the situation of Australian Muslim women individually and building their capacity collectively”, especially women facing domestic violence (Roose 2012, p. 154). Other women mentioned by Roose (2012) include Sarah Sabbagh, Monique Toohey, Manar Etchelebi, and Toltu Tufa. Most of the literature on Muslim women in Australia, and elsewhere, tend to focus on their appearance often being “vulnerable to vilification and media stereotyping” and thus “suffering the triple whammy effect of sexism, racism and religious bigotry” (Posetti 2010, p. 69). By highlighting the active contributions of Australian Muslim women, Roose shatters this

¹³ Mario Peucker also discusses how Muslim community organisations may act as sites of active citizenship for Muslim youth and the Muslim community more generally. See (Peucker and Ceylan 2017).

myth and shows that young Australian Muslim women are highly visible active citizens who “promote mutual respect, dialogue and understanding and . . . have a demonstrable impact” (Roose 2012, p. 156).

Roose also showcases the active positive contributions of young Australian Muslim men, such as Ramzi Elsayed, the co-founder of YMA and the former President of the Islamic Council of Victoria that represented Victoria’s Muslims citizens—and Waleed Aly, who has become one of Australia’s “most prominent (and youngest) intellectuals”, having also been nominated for the “Australia’s local hero” award at the 2011 Australia Day awards (Roose 2012, pp. 156–67). Other prominent active citizens mentioned by Roose (2012) include Issam Nabulsi, Ahmed Hassan, and Nazeem Hussain. As with the young Muslim women, these men have challenged the stigmatisation that Muslim men in Australia are largely non-active citizens potential for radicalisation. Roose goes on to explain the collective contributions of the members in YMA and writes that YMA allowed these young Australian Muslims to be engaged citizens while being in touch with their faith. YMA “planted the seed” for these young Muslims to connect with their faith and themselves, even though they might not have been practising adolescent Muslims (Roose 2012, pp. 161–62). For most of these young Muslims, YMA gave them the motivation to step outside their comfort zone and challenge the racism and hostility that many young Muslims face in Australia—then and today.

Roose’s analysis of YMA’s achievements makes an important contribution to the gap in current literature that often marginalises the achievements of young Muslims to instead focus on issues of identity, belonging and not belonging, radicalisation in youth, and terrorism. However, Roose’s study is limited to certain individuals who had once been affiliated with YMA, and most of his interviews were conducted prior to 2012. His study is also limited to Melbourne youth and therefore does not provide a wider scope that includes the achievements and active citizenship of other Muslim youth in Australia. Regardless, his article is one of the very few that examine Australian Muslim youth achievements—a gap that needs to be addressed in a more substantial research.

Similar to the Australian Muslim youth mentioned by Roose, the young Australian Muslims who attended in the National Muslim Youth Summit (NMYS) in 2007 expressed desire to actively engage in community services so as to “educate and create a greater space for dialogue to dispel negative perceptions; take away the feeling of being marginalised, and a lack of belonging to a wider community”.¹⁴ The National Muslim Youth Summit aimed to provide a space that brought together over four hundred Australian Muslim youth to explore issues of common concern for youth and what their aspirations were in addressing them to facilitate civic engagement. By writing about the NMYS, B. Hass Dellal (2007) shows that Australian Muslim youth should not be considered as non-active citizens; rather, they aspire to overcome challenges in finding ways to build better relationships between themselves and those around them. Another independent National Muslim Youth Summit was organised by ISRA Australia in 2016 and then again in 2018. A recent report was published that summarised the findings from the 2018 NMYS. These findings also showed that Australian Muslim youth, more than ten years after the 2007 youth summit, were still actively involved in voicing their concerns and aspirations in order to find ways to continue to build levels of civic engagement and become active Australian citizens.¹⁵ Topics that were discussed in the summit focussed on leadership and how leadership opportunities can be accessed by Australian Muslim youth either online, personally, professionally, ethically, politically, in the Muslim community, and when considering issues of gender and issues facing future leaders.

Both sources attempt to fill the gap in current literature on Australian Muslim youth by showing that Australian Muslim youth do actively participate in Australian society even if it is by attending summits to raise their concerns. Even so, there is a need to focus

¹⁴ (Dellal 2007).

¹⁵ See (Ozturk et al. 2018).

on individual stories from Australian Muslim youth, as reports only show findings and issues raised by the Muslim youth without showing how they, personally, have dealt with these issues and concerns. Some Muslim youth, such as those mentioned by Roose, have undergone a transformative process or found the motivation—through YMA, for example—to become actively engaged citizens. It is the process by which Australian Muslim youth become active citizens that needs more scholarly attention, as this process provides insight into Muslim youth decision-making processes, their choices, the factors that may or may not have influenced their behaviours, and how faith plays a role in their active citizenship and positive transformations.

Aside from the literature mentioned above in this section, no other scholarly literature—that has come to our attention—places a focus on Australian Muslim youth and their active citizenship. There have been media reports on certain young Australian Muslim individuals, such as Waleed Aly, Tasneem Chopra, and Amna Karra-Hassan, but these media reports do not extensively focus on their achievements and often tend to focus on their identity as Muslims and how they have overcome some of the challenges their faith may or may not have placed on them.

Any literature on young Muslim women's active citizenship gravitates to considerations on their dress as in the case of Muslim women; their dressing, particularly the head covering, is seen as a barrier in their active citizenship. For example, Catherine Palmer's study on Muslim women in sport provides insight into the way young Muslim women negotiate their identities through social activities, thus demonstrating their capacity to engage in active citizenship. However, it is still framed under issues of social inclusion, belonging, negotiating identities between Islam and the West, and the successful integration of young Muslim refugees through social activities such as sport. It does not provide an account of young Muslim women's sense of self-agency and choice to play sport because they enjoy it, similar to other youth in Australia. Palmer's study focusses on how young Muslim women are placed in the bubble of otherness where they participate in sport as a means of belonging to a Western (Australian) society that does not perceive them as their own. Palmer's study examines these young women's decision to play soccer "as a way of establishing and embellishing a particular cultural identity that both affirms and challenges many of the traditions of Islam" (Palmer 2009, p. 28). However, Palmer, does show how these young Muslim women do present adolescent insecurities:

These young women were highly typical of other girls growing up in a hugely mediated, Western consumer society. They were conscious of their body shape (they spoke of their uniforms "making them look fat"), mindful of the latest fashions and obsessed with boys, movie stars and the latest "spunks" of popular music. Indeed, the version of femininity that these young women acted out shared many of the mannerisms and attributes of adolescent girls in Australia ... (Palmer 2009, p. 32)

The problem with this analysis is that it presents young Muslim women's feelings as something that is unexpected given their religious and cultural backgrounds instead of showing that their feelings of insecurity and love for popular culture is something that is *normal*, something that is part and parcel of who they are as *young people* in the society they live. Palmer's study is also limited to the experiences of refugee women, which a number of studies tend to focus on, rather than the experiences of Australian-born Muslim women. Further, her study is also limited to Somali Muslim women living in South Australia, so her conclusions are not representative of wider Australian Muslim women experiences, which needs further attention. Still, Palmer does illuminate the ways in which Muslim women, regardless of their status, find ways to be active citizens through social activities such as soccer.

Other literature focussing on Australian youth in general as active citizens may help inform future research on Australian Muslim youth and their stories of success. For example, Ariadne Vromen (2011) examines how Australian youth use online platforms to become empowered but dutiful citizens. She found that although a majority of online

websites still followed a top-down approach to young people's civic engagement—much like the traditional electoral processes, for instance—there were some sites that allowed Australian youth to express their political viewpoints and encourage their active citizenship.¹⁶ However, Vromen's study focusses on a sample of a hundred Australian youth and their online use in 2010 based on a 2006 longitudinal study.¹⁷ Despite its limitations, her article may shed light into how Australian Muslim youth may use online platforms to become active citizens, especially if their recorded stories on their active citizenship show that online platforms motivated them to become engaged citizens.

However, some Muslim youth may find it difficult to be active citizens, especially when it comes to contributing back to society in the workforce. The issue of unemployment is one that affects Muslim youth across Australia, and it is an issue that arises due to instances of discrimination. In her study of eighteen young job-seeking Australian Muslims, Pam Nilan (2011) found that Muslim youth in the suburbs of Western Sydney found it difficult to get a job because they were "treated with suspicion because of their Muslim background, ethnicity, accent and/or appearance" (Nilan 2011, p. 57). However, Nilan also found that the problem of unemployment does not only affect Muslim youth, it also affects the wider youth population in Australia in general (Nilan 2011). The difference is that the percentage of Muslim youth unemployment is much higher than the national average, according to the 2006 census, and since then, the "situation has improved only marginally" (Nilan 2011). Nilan's brief study on Muslim youth unemployment is fruitful for it opens up opportunities for scholars to continue her research to find deeper patterns on Muslim youth experiences in finding employment (Nilan does acknowledge that her study is very limited, and that further research is required). Her study is also important for an understanding on why some Muslim youth may not actively engage in society. It is not because Muslim youth *do not* want to contribute back to society through employment, it's that "there appears to be a remarkably unanimous moral panic about Muslims in the non-Muslim Australian community" (Nilan 2011, p. 50) who thus consciously or subconsciously discriminate against them, thus preventing them from gaining employment.

This section has shown that although there has been some focus on Australian Muslim youth as active citizens in recent literature, the focus has not been expansive enough to include Australian Muslim youth individual accounts of their active citizenship, nor has there been a focus on the specific factors that encouraged them to become active citizens. Roose's study on Australian Muslim youth offers only a brief biographical account of their active citizenship over time and provides some personal insight into how the YMA instilled a motivation towards faith and active citizenship for these individuals. The NMYS reports only showcased Australian Muslim youth concerns and did not provide accounts from the Muslim youth themselves on what they have personally done to become active citizens—although both reports are invaluable sources as they may inform future research on the issues and concerns that young Australian Muslims face, especially issues sitting outside the trajectory of identity and belonging, and how these issues may be addressed. El-Haj and Bonet's analysis only provides suggestions on areas that current literature needs to address when it comes to the study of Muslim youth in general in the West—a source that may also assist in future studies on Muslim youth in the West, especially on Australian Muslim youth and their experiences.

6. Conclusions

The literature covered in this article offers valuable insights into Muslim youth in the West and in Australia and provides an excellent basis for conducting further research into the challenges and issues faced by Muslim youth and ways they overcome those issues. The findings of research conducted in the last two decades (2000–2020) period can be summed up in the following key points.

¹⁶ See (Vromen 2011).

¹⁷ The online platform has changed since this study was conducted and published, and Australian youth civic engagements online may have drastically increased since then as new forms of social media platforms have provided them opportunities to become actively engaged citizens.

One, much of the literature on Muslim youth has been comparative toward Protestant and Catholic religious groups, primarily in the United States, whose youth groups have used their religiosity to give back to the American community.

Two, most of the studies done on Muslim youth tend to be gender-focused, particularly focussing on Muslim women, their veiling, and its impact on Muslim women's identity, religiosity, and relationship with Western culture. Most of the research conducted involving young male Muslims focus on terrorism and radicalisation.

Three, Australian Muslim youth are not sure what it means to be Australian and how Australianness reflects on their identity. The discussion allows for an understanding on Muslim youth feelings of inclusion and how they navigate their multiple identities in a society that sees them, more or less, as disengaged individuals who pose a threat to the Western way of life. Some literature on Australian Muslim youth has placed a focus on the negative perceptions of Muslim youth and their perceived radicalisation or unwillingness to integrate into Australian society because of their religious affiliation with Islam.

Four, there is emphasis in the literature that the "enemy within" paradigm generates a suspect community mindset among Muslim youth. The term suspect community not only reinforces the image of Muslims as suspects in the subconscious minds of the public, it simultaneously influences the way Muslims perceive themselves as a suspect community and affects how they interact with their faith, others in society, the law, official policies, and authorities. Importantly, this perception has a major impact on Muslim youths' identity formation and sense of belonging.

Five, most of the focus tends to be on Muslim youth immigrants rather than Western-born youth who are expected to have a direct and strong relationship with their host country, thus limiting the focus on Muslim youth to themes around conflicting and disengaged identities associated with being migrants or children of migrants.

Six, mosques play an important role for Australian Muslim youth in acquiring a sense of belonging and clarifying their Muslim identity. However, the role of the mosque is limited, and it depends on the services provided in the mosques and the type of mosques, whether it is ethnic based, small, or large complexes that use English language.

Seven, youth–adult partnership in Australia is an important key for success in community youth engagement, as youth do not always have the resources, experience, and means for successful civic action. Youth will most likely only engage in civic activities if they feel like they can make a meaningful contribution to their society or community and they are empowered to take leadership roles and given real responsibilities.

Eight, despite their tenuous sense of belonging and awareness of negative political and public attitudes towards Muslims, Australian Muslim youth take advantage of opportunities to engage with others in society. In this willingness to engage, religion is identified as a key component of empowerment and confidence in engaging civic activities. The combination of religion and civic activities has a moderating effect on Muslim youth identity.

An important conclusion of this review is that most of the research studies are dated. There have been significant changes, and youth quickly evolve and adapt; there is a need to research Australian Muslim youth to see how they evolved in the last decade especially with respect to the impact of increased scrutiny on Muslim youth since the emergence of ISIS in 2014 and their social media campaign to recruit Muslims around the world.

7. Issues for Further Research

These valuable findings and insights at the same time reveal gaps in knowledge and offer a roadmap in charting new research. In this systematic review and analysis of literature, the following important areas of research are needed.

First, the current literature focussing mainly on radicalisation and disengaged identities among Muslim youth ignore generic adolescent factors and external social factors that influence all Australian youth irrespective of their religious and ethnic identities. After all, Australian Muslim youth are youth first and foremost. They participate in and undergo

the same phases that any other Australian youth would, too—albeit their decisions and actions may or may not be heavily influenced by their religious identity.

One such way would be to examine literature on youth in general living in Australia. For example, Ian [McAllister \(2016\)](#), examines the way Australian youth use the internet as a means of engaging with the electoral process. Julie [Hepworth et al. \(2016\)](#) examine how drinking behaviour among youth are greatly influenced by social pressures. Using their results on general youth behaviours and choices when it comes to drinking will help understand how Muslim youth deal with social pressures, especially when most Western youth cultures tend to go against their religious practices. Annie [Abello et al. \(2016\)](#) examine how social exclusion among Australian youth can create a measure of disadvantage that impacts youth well-being well into adulthood. As Muslim youth in Australia already form a minority of the youth population, their experiences of social exclusion may be more severe than their Australian counterparts. A comparison between Muslim youth and Australian youth experiences of social exclusion may reveal correlating patterns or they may show how Muslim youth have used their challenging experience to positively transform themselves. These issues on Australian youth can be applied to the experiences of Australian Muslim youth broadly or in a more specific way.

Second, more research is needed on the volunteering of Muslim youth. Studies on increased activity online tends to overshadow volunteering and involvement in the traditional organisations where Muslim youth are still very active in large metropolitan cities in Australia. Studies that examine both online and traditional activism and volunteering space are needed to understand the dynamics involved and the nature of change and shift that may be taking place.

Third, much of the research focus on Australian Muslim immigrant youth, whose experiences may differ drastically to those Muslim youth who were born and raised in Australia. The majority of Australian Muslim youth were either born in Australia or went to school in Australia. In this respect, research is also lacking on how Islamic schools and new large mosque complexes shape the civic engagement and social isolation of Australian Muslim youth even though they are born in Australia.

Fourth, the ways that some Muslim youth use their unique sense of identity as Australian Muslims to become successful citizens engaged in positive action is not known. A focus on this would provide fresh insight that moves away from current discourse on Muslim youth as disengaged citizens with disengaged identities and helps to see evolution of Australian Muslim identity in the making.

Fifth, a focus on Australian Muslim youth civic engagement is much needed, particularly a focus on how Muslim youth use avenues other than their faith to express themselves and their commitment to society. While religion plays an important role in the lives of many young Muslims, not all feel a connection between their faith and their choices when it comes to engaging in civic activities. For positive civic engagement of Muslim youth, formations of bonding networks need to be explored and understood. It is not known the degree to which bonding networks influence the identity formation and positive transformation of Muslim youth.

Sixth, adult–youth partnership is highlighted, but there is no research done to examine how this works and is managed in practice in organisations that successfully integrate youth involvement along with experienced older leaders.

Seventh, there is a need to include Australian Muslim youth individual accounts of their active citizenship and more significantly, it is the process by which Australian Muslim youth become active citizens that needs more scholarly attention, as this process provides insight into Muslim youth decision-making processes, their choices, the factors that may or may not have influenced their behaviours, and how faith plays a role in their active citizenship and identity development.

Eighth, much of the research and literature focus on issues Muslim youth are facing and the threat they are seemingly pose with radicalisation. There is a need to understand the opposite process of successful integration of Muslim youth in society, positive Muslim

youth transformations, and their contributions to Australian society. Understanding these may shed better light in social policies and educational methods.

Despite the limitations in current literature exploring Muslim youth in the West, there are still ample ways that the literature can be expanded to examine the factors and influences that shape Muslim youth identities beyond the political trajectories of terrorism, Islamophobia, and counter-terrorism, and how they have used these alternative avenues to undergo a positive transformation in their lives, integrate in society successfully as Australians, and contribute to Australian society.

Author Contributions: Conceptualisation, M.O.; methodology, M.O. and M.Ć.; investigation, M.Ć.; writing—original draft preparation, M.Ć.; writing—review and editing, M.O. and M.Ć.; funding acquisition, M.O. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received funding from Islamic Sciences and Research Academy of Australia. The research also received funding from Centre for Public and Contextual Theology at Charles Sturt University.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Abdel-Fattah, Randa. 2020. Countering Violent Extremism, Governmentality and Australian Muslim Youth as ‘Becoming Terrorist’. *Journal of Sociology* 56: 372–87. [CrossRef]
- Abello, Annie, Rebecca Cassells, Anne Daly, Gabriela D’Souza, and Riyana Miranti. 2016. Youth Social Exclusion in Australian Communities: A New Index. *Social Indicators Research* 128: 635–60. [CrossRef]
- Abu El-Haj, Thea Renda, and Sally Wesley Bonet. 2011. Education, Citizenship, and the Politics of Belonging: Youth from Muslim Transnational Communities and the ‘War on Terror’. *Review of Research in Education* 35: 29–59. [CrossRef]
- Al-deen, Taghreed Jamal. 2019. Agency in action: Young Muslim Women and Negotiating Higher Education in Australia. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 40: 598–613. [CrossRef]
- Al-Natour, Rayan L. 2015. The Construction of Sydney’s ‘Muslim Ghettos’. *Contemporary Islam* 9: 131–47. [CrossRef]
- Arnold, Mary E., Brooke Dolenc, and Elissa E. Wells. 2012. Youth Community Engagement: A Recipe for Success. *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship* 1: 56–65.
- Bennett, W. Lance, Chris Wells, and Deen Freelon. 2011. Communicating Civic Engagement: Contrasting Models of Citizenship in the Youth Web Sphere. *Journal of Communication* 61: 835–56. [CrossRef]
- Bhopal, Kalwant. 1998. How Gender and Ethnicity Intersect: The Significance of Education, Employment and Marital Status. *Sociological Research Online* 3: 29–39. [CrossRef]
- Billet, Paulina. 2014. Dark Cloud or Silver Lining? The Value of Bonding Networks during Youth. *Journal of Youth Studies* 17: 847–56. [CrossRef]
- Breen-Smyth, Marie. 2014. Theorising the ‘Suspect Community’: Counterterrorism, Security Practices and the Public Imagination. *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 7: 223–40. [CrossRef]
- Bull, Melissa, and Halim Rane. 2019. Beyond Faith: Social Marginalisation and the Prevention of Radicalisation Among Young Muslim Australians. *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 12: 273–97. [CrossRef]
- Carr, James, and Amanda Haynes. 2015. A Clash of Racialisations: The Policing of ‘Race’ and of Anti-Muslim Racism in Ireland. *Critical Sociology* 41: 21–40. [CrossRef]
- Cherney, Adrian, and Kristina Murphy. 2016. Being a ‘Suspect Community’ in a Post 9/11 World—The Impact of the War on Terror on Muslim Communities in Australia. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 49: 480–96.
- Collin, Philippa. 2008. The internet, Youth Participation Policies, and the Development of Young People’s Political Identities in Australia. *Journal of Youth Studies* 11: 527–42. [CrossRef]
- Collins, Jock, Andrew H. Jakubowicz, and Wafa Chafic. 2011. *Voices Shaping the Perspectives of Young Muslim Australians*; Canberra: Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship, pp. 1–197.
- Dellal, B. Hass. 2007. *Views from the Muslim Youth Summits Local/International Students*. Penrith: Western Sydney University, September, Available online: https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/equity_diversity/equity_and_diversity/cultural_diversity/past_events/conference_documents/views_from_the_muslim_youth_summits_localinternational_students (accessed on 8 March 2021).
- Dialmy, Abdessamad. 2007. Belonging and Institution in Islam. *Social Compass* 54: 63–75. [CrossRef]
- Dunn, Kevin, and Peter Hopkins. 2016. Guest Editorial: The Geographies of Everyday Muslim Life in the West. *Australian Geographer* 47: 255–60. [CrossRef]
- Dunn, Kevin, Rosalie Atie, Virginia Mappedzahama, Mehmet Ozalp, and Adem F. Aydogan. 2015. *The Resilience and Ordinarity of Australian Muslims: Attitudes and Experiences of Muslims Report*. Penrith: Western Sydney University, School of Social Sciences and Psychology and Islamic Sciences and Research Academy.

- Eva, Nathan, and Sen Sendjaya. 2013. Creating Future Leaders: An Examination of Youth Leadership Development in Australia. *Education + Training* 2013: 55. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Gardner, Vika, and Salman Hameed. 2018. Creating Meaning through Science: 'The Meaning of Life' Video and Muslim Youth Culture in Australia. *Journal of Media and Religion* 17: 61–73. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Grewal, Kiran. 2007. The 'Young Muslim Man' in Australian Public Discourse. *Transforming Cultures eJournal* 2: 116–34. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Harris, Anita, Johanna Wyn, and Salem Younes. 2010. Beyond Apathetic or Activist Youth: 'Ordinary' Young People and Contemporary Forms of Participation. *Young* 18: 9–32. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Hepworth, Julie, Chris McVittie, Toni Schofield, Jo Lindsay, Rose Leotini, and John Germov. 2016. 'Just Choose the Easy Option': Students Talk about Alcohol Use and Social Influence. *Journal of Youth Studies* 19: 251–68. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Hillyard, Paddy. 1993. *Suspect Community: People's Experience of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in Britain*. London: Pluto Press.
- Hosseini, Hamad. 2013. 'Political Identity' of Muslim Youth in Western Diaspora: Towards an Integrative Research Agenda. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 33: 464–76. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Imtoul, Alia. 2006. 'I Didn't Know If It Was Illegal for Her to Talk About My Religion in a Job interview': Young Muslim Women's Experiences of Religious Racism in Australia. *Australian Religion Studies Review* 19: 189–206. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Jakubowicz, Andrew, Jock Collins, Carol Reid, and Wafa Chafic. 2014. Minority Youth and Social Transformation in Australia: Identities, Belonging and Cultural Capital. *Social Inclusion* 2: 5–16. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Jamal, Amaney. 2005. The Political Participation and Engagement of Muslim Americans: Mosque involvement and Group Consciousness. *American Politics Research* 33: 521–54. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Johns, Amelia, Michele Grossman, and Kevin McDonald. 2014. 'More than a Game': The Impact of Sport-Based Youth Mentoring Schemes on Developing Resilience toward Violent Extremism. *Social Inclusion* 2: 57–70. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Johns, Amelia. 2014. Muslim Young People Online: 'Acts of Citizenship' in Socially Networked Spaces. *Social Inclusion* 2: 71–82. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Jones-Correa, Michael A., and David L. Leal. 2001. Political Participation: Does Religion Matter? *Political Research Quarterly* 54: 751–70. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Joppke, Christian. 2013. Through the European Looking Glass: Citizenship Tests in the USA, Australia and Canada. *Citizenship Studies* 17: 1–15. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Kabir, Nahid Afrose. 2005. *Muslims in Australia: Immigration, Race Relations, and Cultural History*. New York: Routledge.
- Kabir, Nahid Afrose. 2008. To Be or Not to Be an Australian: Focus on Muslim Youth. *National Identities* 10: 243–58. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Kabir, Nahid Afrose. 2011. A Study of Australian Muslim Youth Identity: The Melbourne Case. *Journal of Minority Affairs* 31: 243–58. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Karimshah, Ameera, Melinda Chiment, and Zlatko Skrbis. 2014. The Mosque and Social Networks: The Case of Muslim Youth in Brisbane. *Social Inclusion* 2: 38–46. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Keddie, Amanda. 2017. *Supporting and Educating Young Muslim Women: Stories from Australia and the UK*. New York: Routledge.
- Kniss, Fred, and Paul D. Numrich. 2007. *Sacred Assemblies and Civic Engagement. How Religion Matters for America's Newest Immigrants*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Kundnani, Arun. 2014. *The Muslims Are Coming! Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror*. London: Verso.
- Lam, Kim, and Fethi Mansouri. 2020. Beyond (Mis)-Recognition: Muslim Youth and Religiosity in Australia. *Journal of Youth Studies* 2020: 1–16. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Mansouri, Fethi, and Sally Percival Wood. 2008. *Identity, Education and Belonging: Arab and Muslim Youth in Contemporary Australia*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- McAllister, Ian. 2016. Internet Use, Political Knowledge and Youth Electoral Participation in Australia. *Journal of Youth Studies* 19: 1220–36. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Meldrum, Rebeca, Pranee Liamputtong, and Dennis Wollersheim. 2014. Caught Between Two Worlds: Sexuality and Young Muslim Women in Melbourne, Australia. *Sexuality & Culture* 18: 166–79.
- Meldrum, Rebeca, Pranee Liamputtong, and Dennis Wollersheim. 2016. Sexual Health Knowledge and Needs: Young Muslim Women in Melbourne, Australia. *International Journal of Health Services* 46: 124–40. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Miled, Neila. 2019. Muslim Researcher Researching Muslim Youth: Reflexive Notes on Critical Ethnography, Positionality and Representation. *Ethnography and Education* 14: 1–15. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Nasir, Kamaludeen Mohamed. 2016. *Globalized Muslim Youth in the Asia Pacific: Popular Culture in Singapore and Sydney*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nilan, Pam. 2011. Young, Muslim and Looking for a Job in Australia. *Youth Studies Australia* 31: 48–59.
- Noble, Greg. 2009. Everyday Cosmopolitanism and the Labour of Intercultural Community. In *Everyday Multiculturalism*. Edited by Amanda Wise and Selvaraj Velayutham. Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp. 46–65.
- Norton, Anne. 2013. *On the Muslim Question*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Omar, Mona. 2016. Architecture, Culture and Needs of Australian Muslim Communities: Challenges and Opportunities for Social Inclusion. *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies* 3: 1396.
- Ozalp, Mehmet, and Kulsoom Siddiqui. 2012. Youth Identity Formation in the Presence of the 'Other': Reflections on Being Young and Muslim in an Interfaith Setting. In *Women in Islam: Reflections on Historical and Contemporary Research*. Edited by Terence Lovat. New York: Springer, pp. 75–87.

- Ozturk, Ahmed, Samira Din, Fatma Durdu, Mohamed-Islam Bouguetteya, Syamand Hasam, and Mikail Mermi. 2018. *National Muslim Youth Summit: 'Future Leaders'*. Sydney: Islamic Sciences and Research Academy of Australia, December.
- Palmer, Catherine. 2009. Soccer and the Politics of Identity for Young Muslim Refugee Women in South Australia. *Soccer & Society* 10: 27–38.
- Patton, Chloe. 2014. Multicultural Citizenship and Religiosity: Young Australian Muslims Forging a Sense of Belonging after 9/11. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 35: 107–22. [CrossRef]
- Peucker, Mario, and Rauf Ceylan. 2017. Muslim Community Organisations—Sites of Active Citizenship or Self-Segregation? *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40: 2405–25. [CrossRef]
- Peucker, Mario, Joshua M. Roose, and Shahram Akbarzadeh. 2014. Muslim Active Citizenship in Australia: Socioeconomic Challenges and the Emergence of a Muslim Elite. *Australian Journal of Political Science* 49: 282–99. [CrossRef]
- Phillips, Janet. 2007. Muslim Australians. *Parliament of Australia*, March 6. Available online: https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/archive/MuslimAustralians (accessed on 18 March 2021).
- Pickering, Sharon, Jude McCulloch, and David Wright-Neville. 2008. *Counter Terrorism Policing: Community, Cohesion and Security*. New York: Springer.
- Posetti, Julie. 2010. Jihad Sheilas or Media Martyrs? Muslim Women and the Australian Media. In *Islam and the Australian News Media*. Edited by Halim Rane, Jacqui Ewart and Mohamad Abdalla. Carlton: Melbourne University Press.
- Poynting, Scott. 2009. The 'Lost' Girls: Muslim Young Women in Australia. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 30: 373–86. [CrossRef]
- Rane, Halim, and Melissa Bull. 2019. Islamism, Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Perspectives of Young Muslim Australians. In *Contesting the Theological Foundations of Islamism and Violent Extremism*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 115–35.
- Rane, Halim, Mahmood Nathie, Ben Isakhan, and Mohamad Abdalla. 2010. Towards Understanding What Australia's Muslims Really Think. *Journal of Sociology* 47: 123–43. [CrossRef]
- Read, Jen'nan Ghazel. 2015. Gender, Religious Identity, and Civic Engagement Among Arab Muslims in the United States. *Sociology of Religion* 76: 30–48. [CrossRef]
- Roose, Joshua M. 2012. Young Muslims of Australia: Anatomy of a Multicultural Success Story. *The La Trobe Journal* 89: 151–63.
- Roose, Joshua M., and Anita Harris. 2015. Muslim Citizenship in Everyday Australian Civic Spaces. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 36: 468–86. [CrossRef]
- Sentas, Victoria. 2014. *Traces of Terror: Counter Terrorism Law, Policing and Race*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shah, Bindi, Claire Dwyer, and Tariq Modood. 2010. Explaining Educational Achievement and Career Aspirations among Young British Pakistanis: Mobilising 'Ethnic Capital'? *Sociology* 44: 1109–27. [CrossRef]
- Spalek, Basia. 2013. *Terror Crime Prevention with Communities*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Vergani, Matteo, Amelia Johns, Michele Lobo, and Fethi Mansouri. 2017. Examining Islamic Religiosity and Civic Engagement in Melbourne. *Journal of Sociology* 53: 63–78. [CrossRef]
- Vromen, Ariadne. 2011. Constructing Australian Youth Online. *Information, Communication & Society* 14: 959–80.
- Yeung, Anne Birgitta. 2004. An Intricate Triangle—Religiosity, Volunteering, and Social Capital: The European Perspective, the Case of Finland. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 33: 401–22. [CrossRef]