Lifting the veil: Muslim women's adjustment to a New Zealand University

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Abstract

Due to a decline in the number of domestic students in many New Zealand and other foreign Western countries' universities, there is more recruitment of international students. In New Zealand universities, beside the increase in the number of other foreign international students, the number of Muslim international students and especially Muslim women students has increased in the past few years. This is due to internationalisation of New Zealand education and the economic benefits which international students provide to New Zealand economy.

The reason for undertaking this study is because as a Muslim women and a student myself, I wanted to investigate the adjustment problems of the increased number of Muslim women international students at the University of Waikato. This is because, it would provide information to researchers, theoreticians and policy developers regarding adjustment issues that might be specific to Muslim women. Unfortunately, this area is under researched; hence this study could assist in filling the vacuum in this area.

The literature so far has discussed the adjustment issues of international students in general and from the literature there seems to be two main dominant areas where international students suffer adjustment problems. These two areas are the academic environment of the university and the socio-cultural environment of the university. The academic environment has many elements to which many international students are believed to face adjustment problems such as adjusting to the 'study shock'. On the other hand, in the socio-cultural environment, students are believed to face adjustment problem to the culture shock. However, there are many flaws in the existing literature which results in its weakness and hence the need for this study.

In order to discuss the adjustment issues of Muslim women international students' one has to examine the educational background of these students. It is important to also examine the religious and cultural backgrounds of these students because religious beliefs and practices combined with their cultural background have an impact on their adjustment into the foreign academic and socio-cultural

environment. Islam strongly encourages the acquisition of education for women. Looking at the history of Muslim women, one can find great scholars who achieved enormously from their right to education. However today there is great tension in the Islamic world regarding women's education which makes this issue very complex. This is due to the different interpretations of the Islamic scholars of the verses of the Quran, and Muslim people cultural and tribal codes. Therefore, many Islamic countries have taken different approaches to the education of their female population that is from very conservative to liberal ones.

The qualitative approach used in this chapter helped in understanding the perspectives and world views of the respondents which would have not been possible otherwise.

The confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents was catered for before conducting the interviews and pseudo names are used in this study to refer to the respondents of this study. This study is however limited in that the time constrain did not allow me to do a longitudinal study in order to discover the many un answered questions or ambiguous sentences.

This study has revealed four major themes which were identified through this research as being specifically important to the adjustment of Muslim women international students. These women did not view their adjustment as a huge shift instead for them it required more of gentle shift in their adjustment. The similarities in the academic environment of the international students and that of New Zealand universities made the adjustment to the academic environment even smoother. There are also other positive adjustments these international students make while in New Zealand universities. They are more independent and are able to communicate in English language which for most international students seems to be main reason for coming to Western universities.

There is need for the staff and students to understand the religious and cultural beliefs of these international students so that they can help them in the adjustment process. There is also increased need for the universities and policy developers to provide help and support for the international students.

There are many issues that seemed to need further exploration which this study has not managed to find out. The research needs to be done to discuss the huge emotional or psychological impact on the international students' due to teachers' and local students' lack of knowledge of their religious and cultural beliefs.

The researchers also need to investigate how this change in the personality and thinking of women impacts on them when they go back to their home countries.

In theorisation, there is need to theorise the adjustments of students who belong to other religious and cultural groups and how it might impact their adjustment process.

For the practitioners, there is need to investigate the role of the staff and institutes to clearly identify to the role of staff in how they could make international students transaction to the university smoother..

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Chapter 1   **Introduction**

Introduction

There has been an increase in the enrolment of Muslim international students and in particular an increase in Muslim women international students at the University of Waikato in the past few years. This made me realise that there is a need for us to understand what these women students go through when they enter a foreign country possibly for the very first time in their lives. Therefore, the basis of my thesis was to gain information from some of these international women students and find out the adjustment issues they face in their new academic and social environment.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the thesis. First, I will outline the reasons for my interest in the topic of my study and the general research question that arose from it. Second, I will describe the significance of this study. Third, I will outline the thesis chapter by chapter by indicating what will be presented in each of the chapters. I will conclude the chapter with a brief summary.

1.1 My interest in this topic

My interest in this study resulted from my observation of the increase in the number of Muslim women students at the University of Waikato, while I was still doing my last year of a Bachelor's degree in 2005. As a Muslim and a female myself, it fascinated me that each year there was increase in the number of Muslim women who came to do either their undergraduate or post graduate degrees outside their home countries and most of them even came without any relatives. It was also surprising for me to see that the parents and relatives of these women placed great confidence in them to go by themselves and pursue an education without any male support; according to Islam, women should not travel without any mahram (i.e. father, brother, husband or son). I remember, when I and some of my Muslim friends first began to talk about these women, the reactions

from among us were mixed. Some reacted with excitement and hoped that the increase in the Muslim women's' population on campus would have a positive effect on the image of Islam, but some were sceptical. They thought that having these women in a foreign society could create many problems for the women especially for those who had no one to support them. Hence, my interest in finding out about these women grew even more.

What interested me the most was the fact that the culture and the religion of these women contrasted with the culture and the religion dominant in New Zealand. Therefore, I wanted to find out what kinds of adjustment these women had to make once they arrived in a society that seemed so different from their own. As a high school Muslim student in New Zealand I remembered making many adjustments. These adjustments were not only to the school setting in which I was studying and later the university, but to the society and culture of New Zealand as a whole.

Many of these women came to New Zealand with no relatives and possibly with no previous experience of going outside their home countries for education. Moreover, they might not have had any previous experience of living by themselves. The Muslim countries are usually male dominated and the household depends on men. Men are responsible for everything from earning for their families to getting the groceries from the shops. On the other hand, women who work mainly in unpaid labour go outside to shop for themselves. Hence it interested me to find out how these Muslim international women adjusted not only to the self reliance but to the different ways of life in New Zealand universities including the social rules.

Another aspect that made me interested in this topic was the fact that the education system, especially the university system, in many Muslim countries is different to that of New Zealand. I remember the education system in which I was raised had little to do with research work and report writing. Most of our education in high school was based on rote learning and being 'spoon fed' by the teachers. So I wanted to find out what educational backgrounds these women came from and what adjustments they were required to make in order to fit into a

New Zealand university education system in which they were going to study. Also, I was curious to know if there were adjustments to their learning styles or to the teaching styles of the university.

It was also of interest for me to find out whether the social and cultural environment within the university was something that these women found different to that of their country.

General research question

The general research question that guided the early part of this study was: "What are the views of Muslim students about the adjustments they make when they come to a New Zealand university?"

I chose to study women who were enrolled in undergraduate or post graduate studies at the University of Waikato and had attended their respective degrees for at least one semester. I hoped that they would be able to recall the experiences they had at the university and in New Zealand. My interest was to find out what similarities and differences did these women feel were present in the academic and the socio-cultural life of the university and what adjustments they had to make to fit to those differences.

1.2 Significance of the study

This study is significant primarily because in recent years there has been a growth in the enrolment of students from other countries into Western institutions. This has happened in the United States of America, Britain, Australia, Canada and the tertiary institutions in New Zealand (Beaver & Tuck, 1998; Burke, 2004; Samuelowicz, 1987). New Zealand has been involved in international education since the 1950s but it was not until the1980s that it actively started recruiting full fee-paying students (Ministry of Education, 2006). According to the New Zealand Ministry of Education in 2003, there were approximately 11,000 international students in the tertiary institutions alone.

This phenomenon is the result of both globalisation and internationalisation of our education. Even though globalisation was not an explicit theme in the literature of adjustment or an obvious issue that international students have to face during their adjustments, for the purpose of this study it is important to discuss it. One cannot understand the issues that surround international students' adjustments without understanding globalisation itself.

Globalisation is described as an increasingly pervasive influence of Western culture that is English speaking culture, on other countries (King, 2004). As Joseph (2005) says, that the English language nations exercise "an immense influence in global communications, standardisation and codification" (cited in Feith, 2006, p.2). Hence other cultures are marginalised because according to this, a particular culture and language are given dominance over other cultures and languages. But on the other hand, globalisation at its best also promises the enhancement of the free exchange of ideas by creating communities of scholars that cross national boundaries. Thus, as described by Habu (2000), it unites people from different cultural and religious backgrounds who want to pursue unconstrained knowledge. International students enrich the campus communities and expend the host countries' intellectual, ethnic and cultural experiences. Due to their presence in the classrooms, people's understanding of global issues may also strengthen (Carr et. al, 2003).

The vision of globalisation is associated with the aim of internationalisation which is associated with achieving a greater understanding of cultural distinctiveness. It is the process of integrating international dimensions into teaching. It also promotes and enacts global and international functions of a university to become internationally and cross-culturally compatible (Eisenchlas & Trevaskes, 2003; Habu, 2000).

This phenomenon of the growth in enrolment of students from other countries has also been driven by a decline in the number of national students' enrolment in universities (Pickering, 2001). Not only do the international students provide cultural diversity to New Zealand and familiarises New Zealanders with their culture, they are also beneficial for the export-oriented economy of New Zealand

(Ramasamy, 1998). The economic impact of the increasing number of international students on New Zealand has been phenomenal; international education in New Zealand has become a top export earner (Campbell & Zeng, 2006). Given the above context, it is timely to understand and address the issues that relate to the adjustment of the increasing number of international students. I envisage that this study could provide information about the adjustments that Muslim women students need to make in order to fit into a tertiary institution. It will provide me with the opportunity to find out how these women feel about the adjustments that they need to make and whether it has any positive or negative impact on them. This information also will be useful for researchers, theoreticians and practitioners.

Secondly, I feel that this research could provide evidence to tertiary practitioners that are providers and policy developers, about Muslim women's adjustment processes and how they might help with the adjustment processes Muslim women think they must go through in order to adjust to the foreign academic environment.

Finally, I hope that this will be important source of empowerment for Muslim women who are international students and those women who are willing to undertake study about international Muslim women. Unfortunately, there is not as much student's accessible information regarding Muslim international female students as one can find about other international students. Furthermore, New Zealand does not have as much accessible information regarding international students as other countries such as Australia, Britain, Canada and the USA. Therefore, this research could assist in filling part of the void in New Zealand research surrounding Muslim international women students.

In sum, this study addresses an issue which is current and increasingly relevant to New Zealand universities. Researchers, theoreticians and practitioners should be better informed by this study. This study will interest those who are genuinely interested in the adjustment issues of Muslim international female students at Western academic institutions.

1.3 Outline of thesis

The thesis consists of seven chapters including the introduction. The second chapter in the thesis is the 'Literature review'. In this chapter, I review the literature that discusses the adjustments of international students once they arrive into a foreign institute for the purpose of education. This information enabled me to understand the topic of international students and the problems they face in the academic and socio- culture environment of the new institution. In this chapter I also present a critique of the literature.

The third chapter, 'Islam and women's education', discusses the Islamic stance on female education and presents the guidelines of the Quran and the hadiths for Muslim women seeking education. In this chapter, I also theorise the adjustments of Muslim women which they might have to make to fit into a New Zealand university.

The fourth chapter, 'Research design' includes information regarding the qualitative research which I used in this study. The chapter describes the data collection technique, the respondents and the method for analysing the data. It also explains the ethical issues concerning the study and the limitations of the study.

In chapter five, I present the 'Selected findings' from the data gathered through interviewing the participants and their analysis. It describes the four major themes that emerged from the analysis of the data.

Chapter six is the 'Discussion' chapter. This chapter discusses the aspects of the findings that were particularly interesting and seemed important for further exploration. In this chapter, I also present the challenges that the existing literature face and describe recommendations for further research theorisation.

Chapter seven is the 'Conclusion' which presents the summary and highlights of this study.

Summary

In this chapter, I outlined my interest and reasons for undertaking this research study. I also described the significance of the study on many levels and how it can be helpful for researchers, theoreticians and practitioners. Finally I gave a brief description of the content of the chapters within the study.

Chapter 2   **Literature Review**

Introduction

With the globalization and internationalisation of education, and more than one and a half million students seeking education in countries other than their own, student populations and classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse (Asmar, 2005; Ramburuth, 2001). At the same time, universities are losing local students and are therefore faced with increased pressure to educate an increasingly diverse group of students (Pickering, 2000). The universities need to equip themselves with skills for the global marketplace and prepare these students to be effective and responsible citizens.

In this chapter, I will present and critique the literature that relates to the adjustments international students make into universities in countries other than their own. It is a complex and a broad issue because it involves aspects of international education, teaching and learning and the socio-cultural environment context of these students and the institutions they enter. Although my interest is in international Muslim women students studying in New Zealand, this broader literature was used to inform my question. This is for two reasons; there was not much specific literature on Muslim international students and their adjustment issues into foreign countries. Secondly, the broader literature helped with providing information about the adjustments of international students in general. This gave insights into Muslim students as they might be faced with similar problems.

Before I begin the literature review, I will first clarify how and where I found the literature for the review. Second, this literature review will present the two themes which dominate the literature: international students' adjustment to the academic culture and international students' adjustment to the socio-cultural environment. Third, it will describe the five flaws which are evident in the literature yet

acknowledge some of its strengths. Finally, I will conclude with a summary of the chapter.

2.1 Source of the literature

To find literature for this chapter, I mainly used the University of Waikato main library catalogue and the library link databases such as A+ Education, Academic search Primer, Eric database, Ebsco host, Encyclopedia Te Ara, IngentaConnect, JSTOR, Proquest and Tepuna databases. There were many search terms used in order to find an appropriate literature for the topic. I used the title search for many of the search terms, abstract search, subject search, key word search, and I also mixed and matched the terms in order to get better results.

My initial search was based on Muslim women students' adjustment to New Zealand universities. Using the above catalogues, I began to search for literature which talked about Muslim women students in foreign countries. My search terms included words such as Muslim/ women/ education/ adjustment/ problems. I spent considerable time trying to locate this specific literature but when I did not succeed, I had to broaden my search. This is when I started searching for literature on international students in general and the adjustment issues they might face as students in countries other than their own.

It is also important to note that for the purpose of this review; the literature I focused on was about non-English speaking students going to English speaking universities. The reason is that, for Muslims around the world, English is either a second language or a foreign language. The difference between the two is that, in some Muslim countries English is the official language therefore it is learned either in schools or through other means. In other Muslim countries, English is not part of the official language and it is learnt as a foreign language. In the literature review, hence my focus was on non-English speaking students and the adjustment issues they might face when they enter 'Western' universities. For the purpose of this literature review and the study, the term 'Western' universities and 'Western' culture is used to refer to English speaking countries such as the United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Also, I did not look at the adjustment issues of English speaking students and the adjustments they had to make when they go to a non-English speaking university. Their adjustment issues will be different to that of non-English speaking students going to English speaking universities.

Thus, some of the key terms I used during my research were international students /overseas students /foreign students /Muslim women students /Chinese students / Muslim /Arab students /Middle Eastern students /Catholic students /Asian students/ Indonesian /Malaysian students. Also I searched for tertiary education /university education /college education /university and diversity /Western education system /Western academic culture /values /attitudes /behaviours /beliefs. The search also included terms such as adjustment issues /barriers /learning experiences /male and female adjustments /problems of adjustments and so on. I also located literature via references at the back of the articles which I found were useful for the topic and I searched for them using the journal search, inter-loaned them, or found them through the title search on the library catalogue.

At the beginning of gathering the information for the review, I did not focus on any specific date. I wanted to find any information that was there on the topic in the catalogues so I could understand the area well, but later I refined my search. I looked for material that was published in the 1980s and the later years as it became evident that the significant globalization of international students increased mostly in the 1980s and onwards. Then it became important to examine the adjustment issues of the increasing number of international students.

It is also important to note that in the literature on international students, the researchers have also called them 'overseas' students', 'intercultural sojourners', 'foreign students', but I have used the term international students throughout my study because it is the most inclusive. This is because as according to Paige, (1990) international students are:

> individuals who temporarily reside in a country other than their country of citizenship or permanent residence in order to participate in international educational exchange as students order to participate in international

educational exchange as students, teachers, and researchers. They are distinguishable by virtue of being culturally different from their hosts. The definition has three key emphases: the temporary status of sojourners, the educational purpose of the sojourn, and the cultural backgrounds that distinguish international from host country students (cited in Butcher, 2003, p. 6).

On the other hand, adjustment is "a dynamic and interactive process that takes place between the person and the environment, and is directed towards an achievement of fit between the two" (Ramsay, Barker & Jones, 1999, p.129). It is defined as a psychological process which directly impacts not just on the performance but also on the functioning of individuals (Novera, 2004). According to this definition some students might adjust themselves to their new environment easily and quickly, others, due to their inability to adjust to the new situation, might suffer negative impacts. For example, it might result in them not completing their education, finding it hard to communicate their thoughts, and even refusing most or all aspects of the host culture.

As Barker et al (1991) note, the difficulty experienced by international students in adjusting was often affected by their unfamiliarity with the host nation's cultural norms. Hence it can be said that the degree and pace of adjustment of international students can vary from student to student. Thus, students coming from countries with similarities to New Zealand's academic and social culture may find it easier compared to students from countries which have distinctly different cultures (Ramasamy, 1998). Factors such as the duration of the stay of the international students, nature and extent of support provided by the university, availability of social support from people of the same ethnicity, previous experiences and interaction with the host students might all play part in the process of adjustment for the international students (Ramasamy, 1998). This literature review therefore investigates the different areas in which international students are required to make adjustments in order to fit into a Western university.

2.2 Adjustment to the academic culture

The literature suggests that the main adjustment required by the international students is their adjustment to the university or academic culture. This is because the learning in Western universities may involve entering a community with a different code of conduct, a new system of education and a new academic culture. If students do not adjust, it directly impacts on their academic performance and students may drop out of the course, perform poorly, suffer silently or feel frustrated (Ramasamy, 1998).

Before I explore the issues related to international students' adjustment, it is important to firstly describe what is meant by the academic culture. The idea of academic culture refers to the cultural beliefs and practices peculiar to an educational institution such as its shared set of meanings, beliefs, understandings and ideas. Universities have their set of procedures, expectations, jargon and other features that distinguish them from other institutions of learning. Each institute has its cultural norms and expectations (Barnett, 1990; Eisenchlas & Trevaskes, 2003; Furnham, 1997).

Yao (2005) suggests that in an academic culture, one can find features of ethnic culture, local culture and disciplinary culture. Ethnic culture refers to socio-psychological features that may come into effect when a lecturer from one cultural background is presented to students from a different cultural background and vice versa. Local culture describes the situation when lecturers bring their local culture with them and use localised examples to illustrate key points. Finally, the disciplinary culture refers to each discipline having a specialised vocabulary and specific ways of presenting information. Students need to be aware of all three cultures to perform academically.

As mentioned earlier, many international students who come from non-English speaking backgrounds into an English speaking university may come from educational environments that are vastly different from those in the Western or English speaking countries. When they come with very different educational

experiences, students may have radically different expectations of how they are meant to behave, as well as how teachers are meant to behave (Furnham, 1997). This results in the first most important aspect of the academic culture to which the international students need to adjust, that is 'study shock'.

The literature suggests that there is a cultural gap between what is expected and valued in Western academic culture and the expectations international students bring with them based on their educational experiences. This is described as 'study shock'. It results from the shift to new ways of learning, teaching, thinking, interpreting, reading, writing, participating and assessment. Burke (2001) states that 'study shock' involves "significant differences in attitudes to knowledge and approaches to learning that exist between the student's home country and those underpinning institutions of higher education in other countries" (cited in Ramburuth, 2001, p. 6). Thus students who are entering an institution with the ambition to become competent members of the institution have to comply with the fundamental cultural rules which influence the way of thinking, speaking, and writing of the students and lecturers in that academy. They need to adjust to these differences because stressful learning situations can generate "emotions such as anxiety, and may lead to appraisals of what can be done by the person to restore balance between the person and the academic environment" (Ramsay et. al, 1999, p. 130).

International students are required to adjust to three key aspects of 'study shock'. These include, different learning and teaching styles, different roles and expectations of student and teacher relationships and the different English language competence.

2.2.1. Different learning and teaching styles

The first aspect of 'study shock' to which international students' need to adjust includes the different ways of learning and teaching styles that exist in a Western university. Inadequate and inappropriate study skills are one of the most cited reasons for international students' difficulties with academic studies. According to the literature, international students are used to teaching and learning styles that

differ from those typical in Western universities. For example, students entering into New Zealand universities and experiencing its learning culture which strongly emphasises student-centred, problem-based, self-directed, and peer-assisted learning will typically experience significant adjustment (Cameron, & Meade, 2002).

As described by Ladd (1999), the learning styles are "…the preferences students have for thinking, relating to others, and particular types of classroom environments and experiences" (cited in Haydon, 2003, p.12). Thus the challenge of international students' academic adjustment originates from the difference between the Western and the students' own cultures regarding their attitudes to teaching and learning (McCarger, 1993; Samuelowicz, 1987). Cultural background and experiences of international students shape not only their learning development, but also determine what they value as knowledge and learning (Badke, 2003; Furnham, 1997).

Basically, international students are required to adjust to two different areas of the learning and teaching styles. According to the literature they are: the different ways of learning and participation in the classrooms, and the different way of writing in a Western university.

Many overseas students have problems in expressing their opinions and feelings, in speaking out or challenging others, and in dealing effectively in many educational situations (Barker et al, 1991). The literature suggests this is because, for most of them, learning generally has been through rote learning and recitation of known facts rather than student-generated learning. Memory is important for their educational system, "…because the system is based on the fact that your culture has existed for thousands of years, with knowledge being passed down from generation to generation as a treasured heritage" (Badke, 2003, p.6).

This is in contrast to the Western model of education, where knowledge often emerges through collaboration, connectivity and creativity among students and teachers in the classroom interaction. Thus, once the international students enter a Western university they face an intellectual revolution (Burns, 1991), where they

have to engage in the co-construction of knowledge with fellow students and teachers through confrontation and conflict (Holmes, 2005).

As the literature suggests, therefore the adjustment often requires the international students to move away from relying on rote learning and to adapt strategies that will enable them to question, argue and challenge ideas presented to them. It also requires them to reconstruct their communication experiences in order to adjust to Western expectations for the classroom. The literature says that this is because in the Western education system, knowledge is valued only if it is useful and memorizing is less important (Badke, 2003; Ballard, 1987; DC Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2005; Holmes, 2005).

In the Western academic culture, teachers raise questions and leave them unanswered. They expect the students to do further reading to pursue the issue. Therefore the teachers require the students to think and to learn independently, use arguments to support or reject information in the discussion and in their writing, use the library to find information and undertake solitary research (Robinson, 1992). Students are also required to be able to manage their time between their academic routine and social life. Thus, international students, for whom success so far in their lives has been brought about by memorisation and replication, have to move away from that habit and adapt these strategies to succeed in their learning (Ballard, 1987; Burns, 1991; Samuelowicz, 1987).

The literature also suggests that there are differences in the writing styles of international students and those which are used in the Western academic universities. For successful adjustment to university and for international students to become accepted as valued members of their academic discourse community, it is important that they become familiar with "English medium cultural transactions in academic writing and need to be familiar with the norms and conventions of a particular institution" (Woodrow, 2005, p. 3). As one student noted,

> At first I mistook the meaning of 'essay', as in my country it means free talking, free writing. So when I was given my first essay I wrote just my

ideas, my feelings. I had been told about the structure but not about the
content

(cited in Luzio-Lockett, 1998, p.216).

This shows that in academic writing, the students' are required to express
themselves in their writing through using logic, reasoning and argument that leads
to a conclusion instead of merely reproducing one's ideas or other authors' ideas.
In the writing they are required to demonstrate well developed arguments and
critical thinking (Burns, 1991; Furnham, 1997; Yao, 2005).

In other words, international students have to adopt new ways to express their
ideas clearly. They should be able to use logical arguments not just in writing but
to solve different problems and they should apply critical thinking to different
situations and the information provided to them (Badke, 2003; Ballard, 1987;
Furnham, 1997; Holmes, 2005; Jones, 2005; Samuelowicz, 1987). Hence, the
international students need to be aware of the difference between the
responsibilities of a writer and a reader in Western universities (Haydon, 2003).

2.2.2. Different roles and expectations for student and teacher relationships

The second aspect of 'study shock' to which international students' need to adjust
is their understanding of the roles and expectations of the student and the teachers
and their relationship. As the literature suggests, there are differences between the
Western and international students' rules about respect for, and obedience to
authority (Ryan, 2000). In collectivist cultures (which the literature assumes is
that of most international students), emphasis is placed on maintaining group
harmony and restraining public expression of emotions (Barker et al, 1991). Upon
arriving at an individualistic society (that of the West), they find themselves in
learning situations at the university that involve more equal power and status,
higher levels of informality, questioning and challenging the ideas by the teachers.

For many international students this might be problematic to their adjustment as
they were not supposed to make any arguments in the classrooms of their country

of origin (Furnham, 1997; Holmes, 2000; Samuelowicz, 1987). This can be seen from the example below:

> I feel uncomfortable in the class when the student asks teacher questions or something like arguing or challenging with lecturer, because we can say this: it's very impolite… (sic) (YR)
> (cited in Holmes, 2000, p.7).

According to Haydon (2003), this can affect their ability "to learn, to receive help, and to convey knowledge to the professor, all of which will negatively affect their learning experience and academic progress" (p.12).

As the literature suggests, international students frequently view the teacher as the model, an authority, and a parent. Hence they show respect to the teacher by maintaining a formal, distant relationship. Most often they believe that they should agree with the lecturer and accept their authority (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001; Yao, 2005). As stated by one student, "The student is very respectful to the teacher…The status of the teacher is very high. We normally don't go to the teacher unless we have got (a) very important thing (sic)" (cited in Mills, 1997, p.57).

Research also shows that international students call for extensive feedback on their academic writing. When this expectation is not met, they may complain about the teacher's irresponsibility, lack of personal attention and commitment, or feel that they have been given little feedback on work on which they have worked hard. The teachers on the other hand, expect their students to take responsibility for their own learning and develop independence. These differing views are likely to result in unsatisfying and unproductive classroom encounters (Mills, 1997; Yao, 2005).

2.2.3 Different English language competence

The third aspect of 'study shock' to which international students need to adjust is their English language competence. The literature shows that many international

students and their host teachers in English speaking countries still consider the English language problem as the students' major academic barrier. Good language command is seen to be fundamental to academic success as well as a predictor of international students' ability to handle stress (Ramasamy, 1998). According to the literature this is one of the tough challenges for international students during their adjustment period and is also cited as the reason for poor study skills (Holmes, 2005; Butcher & McGrath, 2004; Huntley, 1993; Mills, 1997; Samuelowicz, 1987; Zhai, 2002).

Since English is a foreign language for many of these students, they might experience tremendous difficulties with language. Hence they need to adjust their language competence by reaching beyond the confines of their native language in the new language, if they are to succeed in the academic environment. As the literature suggests, the language difficulties can be a barrier in the academic adjustment of these students. The lack of proficiency in language can lead to their difficulty in "understanding lectures, expressing ideas, and writing reports" (Haydon, 2003, p.11). It also impacts upon their interaction in the classroom, upon their level of dealing with the unfamiliar learning situation as well as upon the different concept of role expectations (Butcher & McGrath, 2004).

As Li et al (2007) say "the language concerns not only made them fearful of communicating with native speakers, but also kept them suffering from a variety of inconveniences in their academic studies and in their daily life" even if they all had been living in foreign countries for a couple of years (Li, Fox & Almarza, 2007, p.8).

According to the literature, the limited language ability of students also creates social challenges and international students' ability to interact effectively with the host students. International students might feel shy about speaking as they might perceive their spoken English to be not fluent enough to meet the demands of the classroom (Haydon, 2003). As one student states, "You think something in your head, and when you say it, it is something different… it is very stressful experience… I cannot contribute to discussions in the classroom because of the language barrier…" (cited in Luzio-Lockett, 1998, p.217). It also impacts on the

student's understanding of what is being studied in the class due to the different slang, accent and speaking pace of the students and the lecturers (Bird & Holmes, 2005; Zhai, 2002).

The pace of the language at which lecturers teach is perceived by many students as extremely rapid and it becomes difficult for them to take notes or to translate information from English to their first language. This is evident from the example below:

> "…but most lecturers talk too fast…It should be more relaxed"
> (cited in Mills, 1997, p.58).

In summary, international students need to adjust to the academic culture of Western universities that is the values, meanings, beliefs, understandings and ideas of those universities. International students need to understand and adjust to the gap that exists between their educational experiences and that of the Western academic expectations. The 'study shock' they experience at Western universities has three elements. The first element to which international students have to adjust is the different learning and teaching styles. This includes the different ways of learning and participation in the classrooms and the different ways of writing in Western universities. They need to develop strategies to argue and challenge the points of view presented to them by their teachers. They also need to be able to produce writing. The second element of 'study shock' is the different roles and expectations for student and teacher relationships. International students need to adjust to the expectations of the teachers by sharing power, developing critical thinking and by questioning the ideas of their teachers. The third element is the different English language competence. They have to adjust their English language competence in order to communicate their thoughts well.

2.3 Adjustment to socio-cultural environment

Apart from the adjustment to the academic culture, the second theme to which the literature suggests that international students need to adjust is the socio-cultural environment. It is very hard to separate the socio-cultural environment within the university setting and that present outside the university setting. This is because

most literature refers to the socio-cultural environment which is found outside the university setting as well such as the adjustment to the culture and values of the host country. For the purpose of this literature review, I will focus on the literature which discusses the socio-cultural environment within the university context. This is because the focus of this literature review is on the adjustments of international students in an academic situation not in a social context outside university.

Since the culture includes aspects of local and disciplinary cultures such as the use of localised examples by the teachers and specialised vocabulary and specific ways of presenting information, international students therefore have to cope with the transition to tertiary studies and at the same time, make further transitions to the new culture found within the academic environment, that is, the socio-cultural environment of the university. It consists of

> … patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially attached values
> (cited in Zhang, 2002, p.16).

Hence according to the literature, in the socio-cultural environment's adjustment one has to squeeze or compromise one's identity into the constraints of pre-established sets of rules and conventions (Luzio-Lockett, 1998). It is related to interaction between the personal characteristics of the students and the structure of the host community. In the 1980s, the difficulties of international students adjusting to the academic environment was also seen as resulting from their lack of knowledge about the new culture's social rules, morals and values, hence their lack of socio-cultural environemnt understanding (Bochner, 1986; Edmond, 1997; Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Therefore, the challenge of learning to live and study effectively in the new culture proves difficult for most of them (Edmond, 1997; Novera, 2004).

According to the literature, sometimes international students might experience what is called 'cultural shock' while adjusting to the different social rules (Furnham, 1997; Rosenthal, et al., 2006; Ryan, 2000). It is experienced due to the "anxiety from losing all familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse, such as customs, gestures, or words" (Ramasamy, 1998, p.13). The literature also describes it to be primarily an emotional reaction that follows from not being able to understand, control and predict another's behaviour.

According to the literature, most international students face cultural shock outside the university setting and they can also face it while they are at the university. The literature suggests that it is seen as a transitional experience which results in the adaptation of new values, attitudes and behaviour patterns. For example, the Western culture and the culture of many international students vary in the extent to which they allow bodily contact. Contact cultures include Arab, Latin American and southern European groups. In non-contact cultures (that of America, Australia, United Kingdom, New Zealand and other Western countries), touching is only allowed under very restricted conditions, for instance within the family, in a brief handshake with strangers or in specialised role relationships. Contact outside these approved settings can be a source of considerable anxiety. For example, when a high touch culture meets a low touch culture, the low touch contact person might be seen as cold and unfriendly (Furnham & Bochner, 1986).

It is argued that successful adjustment is largely determined by interpersonal flexibility, that is, how well international students are able to function within and adjust to the host country's culture, lifestyles, and social customs (Ramasamy, 1998). According to the literature, adjustment to the socio-cultural environment also requires international students to adjust themselves to the local fellow students present in the university and in their classrooms. They have to be able to understand their ways of communication and interaction in order to successfully interact with them.

Poor language skills, as mentioned earlier, are detrimental not only to the academic process, but also to social interaction between international students and local students (Butcher & McGrath, 2004; Huntley, 1993; Ward, Bochner &

Furnham, 2001). As one student noted, "It's hard to talk with them because they don't understand me. I don't understand them… the way they talk is different" (cited in Holmes, 2005, p.298).

The studies on the friendship patterns of international students' show that they tend to belong to three social networks within the university. These are the mono-cultural network, bi-cultural network and multi-cultural network (Bochner, Hutnik & Furnham, 2001). Mono-cultural network is when the international students form bonds with fellow compatriots to express, affirm and rehearse expression of culture and ethnic values. A bi-cultural network is formed when international students link with host nationals. The function of this network is largely instrumental and it facilitates the academic and professional aims of the international students. The multi-cultural network consists of international students' friendships with other non-compatriot foreign students. The function of this network is largely recreational providing mutual support (Bochner, Hutnik & Furnham, 2001; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001).

However, for international students to succeed in the academic environment as well as the socio-cultural environment, they have to make efforts to become bi-cultural. As the literature suggests, this is because the interaction with the local students is an important factor in the international student's social adjustment. It is also found to improve communication competency and to facilitate the general adaptations to life overseas. Spending more time with the host national students is related to fewer psychological problems (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). Local students can provide international students with the preferred informational support, such as providing help with the language and the academic difficulties. Hence the more time they spend with the host students, the better the adjustment.

In summary, in the socio-cultural environment, the international students need to adjust to the new values, attitudes and behaviour patterns of the university. They might have to squeeze or compromise their identity into the constraints of pre-established sets of rules and conventions of the university. International students coming to high touch cultures have to adjust to the amount of body contact that is allowed to those cultures. They are also required to adjust to the ways of

communication and interaction that are found among the local students. International students are thus required to become bi-cultural by making links with the host nationals if they want to facilitate their academic and professional aims.

2.4 The five major flaws in the literature

In this section I will outline the five major flaws that are evident in the literature reviewed above. Firstly, the literature I reviewed about non-English speaking students going to English speaking institutions and their adjustment issues was dominated by issues related to Asian students. There were very few studies done on students from Malaysian, Indonesian, and Indian and Arabic backgrounds. The studies were mainly based in the countries of United States, United Kingdom and Australia. There was very minimal literature based on the adjustment issues of international students in New Zealand. Therefore there is a need for further research to be done in New Zealand which would include adjustment issues of international students from other ethnic backgrounds.

Even though the literature talked about the adjustment issues faced by international students, the second flaw found in the above literature is that the studies were not specifically directed towards the issues of international women students and the difficulties they face in adjusting to foreign universities. Authors tended to treat the international students as a homogenous group instead of treating the issues faced by men and women international students separately. It is important to do so because women's adjustments into a foreign university could be different to the adjustments of men.

Not only does the above literatures lack focus on women's adjustment issues, but it also lacks research on the adjustment issues faced by Muslim students especially women. It is important to do the studies on Muslim women's adjustment issues because in recent years and due to globalisation, there are growing numbers of Muslim women students going to Western institutions to pursue their higher education. It is important to understand their particular needs and problems and to cater effectively for them.

The third flaw in the literature is that there is very little research done on the adjustment of international students with their local fellow students. Mostly, the research has looked at how and why local students do not want to interact with the international students (and vice versa).

The literature also lacks detailed studies on the impact of the lack of interaction between the local students and international students and how it can affect the international students' adjustment from the perspective of the international students. The research does not talk explicitly about the importance of the interaction between the two groups and how it can be beneficial for the international students' communication and academic and social adjustment.

The fourth flaw is that in the above literature, the adjustments of international students were seen as negative. However, there might be some positive adjustments that the international students have to make while they are in a foreign university. These positive adjustments need to be included in the research so one can look at both sides of the story.

The fifth flaw in most of the above literature is its lack of well theorised research. Most of the literature has just focused on finding out about the international students adjustment issues in general. The research that has been carried out is descriptive and more linear. Researchers have just collected data whereas it is important to have well theorised research because it gives richness to the research by providing new directions and new approaches to the issues in the research.

Summary

In conclusion, with the globalisation and internationalisation of education and decrease in the number of local students, New Zealand university classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse. Therefore this chapter reviewed the literature on the adjustment issues of non-English speaking international students upon their entrance to a Western university. The literature first described the source of literature that is; how and from where the information was gathered and gave detail of the terms that were used to retrieve the information.

The chapter then outlined the two dominant themes that emerged from the literature regarding the adjustment of international students. The two themes were international students' adjustment to the academic culture and international students' adjustment to the socio-cultural environment.

In the academic culture, international students are faced with 'study shock' which has three elements. The first element to which international students have to adjust is the different learning and teaching styles. This includes the different ways of learning and participation in the classrooms and the different ways of writing in Western universities. The second element of 'study shock' is the different roles and expectations for student and teacher relationships. The third element is the different English language competence. They have to adjust their English language competence in order to communicate their thoughts well.

In the socio-cultural environment found within the universities, the international student needs to adjust to new values, attitudes and behaviour patterns. They might have to squeeze or compromise their identity into the constraints of pre-established sets of rules and conventions. International students coming to high touch cultures have to adjust to the amount of body contact that is allowed. They are required to adjust to the ways of communication and interaction found among the local students. International students are also required to become bi-cultural by making links with the host nationals if they want to facilitate their academic and professional aims.

This chapter also outlined the five major flaws found in the research which resulted in the weakness of the literature that was reviewed.

Chapter 3   **Islam and Women's Education**

Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the literature on the adjustments international students need to make when they are in a foreign university. It presented the two dominant themes that emerged from the literature, international students' adjustment to the academic culture and international students' adjustment to the socio-cultural environment. The purpose of this chapter is to specifically look at Muslim female students and theorise the adjustments they have to make to fit into a Western university given their religious orientation. This is because religious beliefs and practices combined with their cultural background might have an impact on their adjustment into the foreign environment.

This chapter will firstly look into the position of Islam in relation to education in general because before examining the adjustments of Muslim women students, one needs to understand Islam and its stance regarding women's education. This might provide an insight into the beliefs of these women regarding their right to education and some motivations behind their arrival at foreign universities for their higher education pursuits.

Secondly, the chapter will explore women's education in Islam in particular. It will then outline some of the guidelines which Muslim women need to follow when pursuing education. It is important to look at the Islamic guidelines under which Muslim women can pursue their education. This is because the Islamic law has laid down some rules for women regarding their appearance in public and their social behaviour and interaction, including in education. These guidelines can influence the manner in which these female Muslim international students behave and adjust to their new academic and social environment. The chapter will also present how different Muslim countries have adopted these Islamic guidelines when implementing women's education against this background. This will help us to understand the various complex educational backgrounds to which

some Muslim international women might belong before entering foreign universities.

Thirdly, the chapter will theorise the adjustment Muslim women have to make to the academic culture and to the socio-cultural environment of a Western university. Based on the information from chapter two 'Literature Review' and this chapter, I will then present the refined research question. This chapter will conclude with a summary of the chapter.

Before beginning this chapter, it is important to note that as Dr. Douglas Pratt, an internationally recognised University of Waikato scholar in the area of Islamic religion says, there is not much literature on the issue of Muslim women's education as this is an under-researched area (personal communication, July, 18, 2007). Hence the information presented below is taken from sources such as the Quran (the holy book of Muslims) and Hadiths (sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). As a Muslim, it is obligatory to say the words (Peace be upon him) when one mentions the name of the Prophet. Hence, throughout this chapter when the name of Prophet Muhammad is mentioned these words are put in bracket beside it. I have also used fatwas (fatwas are the Islamic religious rulings and scholarly interpretations on a matter of Islamic law) retrieved from Muslim websites which were translated into the English language from their original Arabic language. These websites were selected because they are controlled by contemporary and renowned scholars of Islam. These scholars have both international standings and respect in the world of Muslims.

3.1 Islam and education

Before I begin this section it is essential to explain when and how Islam began and some basic Islamic fundamentals. This will form the base upon which this chapter proceeds.

The religion Islam is a world wide religion, embracing many cultures and nations. The word Islam means "submission", or the total surrender of oneself to God. A believer of Islam is known as a Muslim, meaning "one who submits (to God)".

Islam began fourteen centuries ago when Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was revealed with the first message of God, through Angel Jibrael. It was the verses where the prophet was asked to read, "Read: in the name of your God…." (Quran, 96: 1) These are the first verses of the Quran, and hence began the mission of Islam.

The Quran is the highest authority for Muslims. The word Quran means "recitation." Muslims believe that the Quran is the literal word of God which was revealed to the messenger, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), and thus it is of Divine authorship (Hewer, 2006). The Quran is seen as the defining point of the Muslim identity. Muslims derive their law and all other decisions based on the Quran. As Rippen states, "The emergence of the Muslim community is intimately connected with the emergence of the Quran as an authoritative text in making decisions on matters of law and theology" (Rippen, 2005, p.40). Therefore, the ideal Muslim's actions should reflect the teachings of the Quran.

For any valid discussion on Islam's perspective on education, we must begin with the Quran, which is supplemented by the Hadiths. The Hadiths as mentioned before, are the sayings and deeds or actions of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and is considered second to the Quran by the Muslim world. The teachings of the Quran are explained through referencing to the Hadiths because the Hadiths places the Quranic verses in its particular context. As Hameed (2006) says that "The Quran is the message, while the Hadiths is the verbal translation of the message into pragmatic terms, as exemplified by the Prophet" (p.1). The Quran is the basis of the Islamic metaphysics but the Hadiths are the applications of those principles in practical life.

In Islam, knowledge and education are highly emphasised (Ahmad, 2003). They are both an integral part of the religion. Islam has always encouraged its followers to gain knowledge, be it knowledge about religion or other branches of knowledge (Jawad, 1998). Islam holds the person who seeks knowledge in high esteem and has exalted his/her position. This is evident from the Quran which says "Allah endows a higher status on those who are knowledgeable" (Badawi, 2007). As stressed by the Quran, the entire aim of the divine revelation and the reason for

sending Prophets to earth is to communicate knowledge. The Quran says "the Prophet recites unto people God's revelation; causes them to grow and imparts to them knowledge and wisdom" (Jawad, 1998).

Islam wants every believer to have wisdom and broad intellectual knowledge as well as a good education in religion. In Islam, education is intended to produce a God-conscious and righteous individual who lives according to the Divine's command. Education in Islam means that one has to attain higher moral and spiritual intellectual interests (Dangor, 2005) The Quran is full of verses which praise learned people, encourage original thinking and personal investigation and criticize unimaginative imitation. For example; the Quran says, "Allah will rise to high ranks those that have faith and knowledge among you" (cited in Badawi, 2007, p.1).

Henzell-Thomas (2005) states that an Islamic education sees the best schools as "thinking schools" where the learners are involved in an active learning environment which allows for seeking and acquiring knowledge through the use of 'reasons'. He further states that the best schools reject the false idea that the knowledge attained through divine revelation is in opposition to acquired human knowledge.

According to the teachings of Islam, learning is an unending process. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said, "Seek knowledge from cradle to grave". In fact, as mentioned earlier, the first verses of the Quran revealed to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) were a command to read (Iqra):

> "Read! In the name of your Lord who created, created man from clots of congealed blood. Read! Your Lord is Most Bountiful One, Who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know" (The Quran, 96:1-2).

The Hadiths' literature also encourages and appreciates knowledge. This is evident from the Hadiths where the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) has said "seek knowledge be it in China". The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) always used to emphasise the importance of knowledge and used to

encourage his followers to seek it. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) has said "The Prophets leave knowledge as their inheritance. The learned ones inherit this great fortune". Hence the learned people are regarded as the inheritors of the prophetic wisdom.

In another Hadiths it is said that "He who goes forth in search of knowledge, is in the way of Allah till he returns" (cited in Kutty, 2002, p.1) and "To rise up in dawn and learn a section of knowledge is better than to pray one hundred rak'at (prayers)" (cited in Sanjakdar, 2001, p.2). The prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) has also reported to have said "There are two people that one is permitted to envy: the one to whom God has given riches and who has the courage to spend his means for the cause of truth; and the one to whom God has given wisdom and who applies it for the benefit of mankind and shares it with his fellows" (cited in Jawad, 1998, p. 17).

In sum, one can see the importance and the high status Islam has given to education and knowledge and to those who are continuously seeking it. As we will see below, Islam has no where indicated either in the Quran or through Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) that women should not attain education. In fact, there is a long history of encouraging women to go in pursuit of knowledge where ever it may be.

3.2 Islam and education of women

The issue of Islam and the education of women is a complex one and is complicated by evidence that scholars in the West (that is English speaking countries such as countries in Europe, the United States, Australia and New Zealand), who debate the status of women's education in the Middle East are often unfamiliar with Islam as a religion, and its ideologies regarding education (Hamadan, 2005). As Pratt noted, this is an under-researched area and Western scholars have more often engaged in debates about the hijab (dress code) then the matter of Muslim women's right to education (personal communication, June, 18, 2007).

In this section, I will try to paint a picture of Islam's relationship to the education of women. I will firstly present Islam's proud history of laws which support the education of Muslim women and of successful, educated women. Second, I will examine the words of the Quran which appear to be very supportive of Muslim women's education. Finally, I will briefly discuss the current economic and political pressures which are fostering women's participation in education in many Islamic countries.

Firstly, 1400 years ago, Islamic law was first to grant women full rights and was ahead of other legal systems including, that of the west. It gave women the right to own a property, and the right to inheritance (Esack, 1999). In Islamic law, women can be employed and vote.

Islam also has a history of successful, educated women. Below are a few examples of the achievements of Muslim women in the past. On the top of the list is Aisha, the wife of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). She was a renowned scholar of her time. Her advice in the affairs of Islamic community was regarded as highly important by the early Islamic rulers. Her knowledge and deep understanding were not restricted only to matters of religion; she was equally distinguished in poetry, literature, history and medicine and all the other branches of knowledge known at that time (Al-Hashimi, 1999).

Other Muslim women were also famous for their achievements in literature and medicine. Al-Khansa was the greatest poetess of her time. She was admired by the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) when he said that her poetry was unsurpassed. In addition, Muslim women attained high status as medical scholars. For example, Zainab of the Bani Awd tribe was a prominent physician and an expert oculist. Umm al-Hassan was a renowned woman of broad knowledge and was famous as a doctor (Ahmad, 2003; Jawad, 1998). Syyida Nafisa was another great scholar. A large number of pupils came to her from different places to learn from her. Imam Shafi'i, founder of the Shafi'i school of Islamic law was one of her illustrious pupils (Doi, 1990). Hence, one can see how early Muslim women seized opportunities and equipped themselves in all branches of knowledge at that time.

Secondly, if we examine the words of the Quran they appear to be very supportive of Muslim women's education. The commands of the Quran are for all Muslims, men and women alike. They do not differentiate between men and women except for some specific cases such as when it comes to a dowry, or the distribution of inheritance. This is when the Quran has specifically mentioned women or men. As Pratt (personal communication, July, 18, 2007) says there is no philosophy in Islam which separates the acquisition of education based on gender.

In Islam, learning is not just a right but it is a responsibility and an obligation for every Muslim regardless of their gender. As Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said, "Seeking knowledge is mandatory on a Muslim male and female" (cited in Al-Hariri, 1987, p. 52). The Prophet thus opened all avenues of knowledge for men and women alike. Hence, like their male counterparts, women are under moral and religious obligation to seek knowledge and develop their intellect. They have to cultivate their talent and then utilise their potential to the benefit of their soul and their society (Ahmad, 2003).

The importance of women being educated in Islam can also be seen from the Hadiths where the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) has reported to have said:

> There are three types of people who shall be doubly rewarded in heaven. The first are those from the Peoples of the Book who have believed in their particular Prophet and then believed in the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). The second is a slave who discharges his duties fully to God and to his master. The third is the man who owns a female slave and who teaches her good breeding and manners, and educates and trains her in the best possible ways and then frees her, and then takes her for his wife- to such a man indeed is a doubled reward!
> (cited in Awde, 2000, p. 94).

In support of women's education, Al-Hashimi (1999) states that the ideal Muslim women are those who take care of their mind by pursuing education just as they

take care of their bodies. This is because the former is no less important than the latter. When one reads the verses of the Quran "But say, O my Rabb (God)! Advance me in knowledge" (The Quran 20:114) and knows the Hadiths that seeking knowledge is their duty, then the Muslim woman knows that she is obliged to seek the kinds of knowledge that have been made obligatory for individuals and communities and that there is no limitation placed on their education.

Women in Islam are central to the domestic and cultural life and the role they play is critical to the society as a whole (Ahmad, 2003). Islam suggests that women are in principle mothers and wives. Hence there is greater emphasis on their search for knowledge especially in branches which could help them in those particular spheres. As Badawi (2007) states, to have an ideal Islamic society, it is necessary that the women have education and training to equip themselves for the roles as teachers, nurses and as medical practitioners. This will be beneficial to the individual and Islamic society as a whole.

Both the Quran and Hadiths encourage women to develop all aspects of their personality. Women can learn all branches of science and are free to choose any field of knowledge which interests them. The educated Muslim woman should not only spread out her moral qualities in the environment of her home, but she should also have an active role in the broad fields of social, economic, and political development (Ahmad, 2003). Thus in order to be able to participate in such fields, Muslim women need equal access to educational opportunities.

Finally, Islam's current encouragement of women's education could also be shaped by economic and political variables. The first of such variables are the "Millennium Development Goals" set out by the United Nations. Many Muslim countries and other countries around the globe are bound to follow these goals since they are signatories to the documents. If one looks at the goals laid out by the United Nations, the third goal of the UN Millennium Development is to "Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015" (United Nations, 2005, p.1).

The developing countries often have to be working towards this goal if they want to be funded by the developed countries. This is because "both developed and developing countries started to match these commitments with resources and action, signalling a global deal in which sustained political and economic reform by developing countries will be matched by direct support from the developed world in the form of aid, trade, debt relief and investment" (United Nations, 2005, p.1). Hence, it is understandable that developing countries, including Islamic countries, will work towards making policies that ensure women and girls achieve educational success.

Another variable that might come to play a role is Islamic countries' political relations with Western countries. For example, it is likely that many Islamic countries want to show their Western political 'friends' that they are improving the situation of women in particular. This is due to the fact that Western countries often view Muslim women as being oppressed by government and people. Hence, many Islamic countries might be developing education for women to please Western 'friends'. This is because Muslim political leaders may want their Western friends to provide them with political, military or economic support, which many of them require in order to keep their political agendas.

Despite the positive story mentioned above, there seems to be evidence that in many Islamic countries there is not much support of women's education. This evidence is generated by the media and feminist critiques and is the result of various religious interpretations of the Quran (including cultural/tribal codes). Western people's understandings of the issue are coloured by the media. Many assume that Islam is the key behind strong prohibitions against women's education. Yet we have seen that the Quran has many statements which support women's education. The Western media has played an important role in shaping our views of this issue. Many people have formulated their impression of Islam through the disturbing images presented by the global media (Ahmad, 2003).

After September 11, 2001, and the terrorist acts attributed to some Muslims, Islam has been the focus of the media and mostly for negative reasons. The Western media did not go beyond the appearances and the individual cases, and presented

the worst case scenarios as the general state of things (El-Diwani, 2005). For example, the Western world is continuously shaken by the images of Muslim women. For example, after September 11, 2001 the media focused on the way the Taliban (then ruling Afghanistan) were depriving its women from education. It was portrayed as done in the name of Islam. Hence, many in the Western world came to believe that it is the religion Islam which deprives women of education.

This belief is strengthened by feminists. Although there is not time to explore these fully, suffice it to say that Muslim feminists have been particularly impressive in their critiques. They identify Muslim women's oppression as a result of the male elite. As Fatima Mernissi says, "if women's rights are a problem for some modern Muslim men, it is neither because of the Quran, nor the Prophet, nor the Islamic tradition, but simply because those rights conflict with the interests of male elite…" (cited in Waines, 1995, p. 257)

Underlying the above are the different scholarly interpretations and the tribal/liberal interpretation of the Quran. In the Islamic world today, there are four major schools of thoughts namely, Hanafi, Shafi'i, Hanbali and Maliki.. These schools have been the result of the difference in the opinions of the scholars regarding the interpretation of some of the Quranic text. Although these scholars did not exist at the same time and in the same part of the world, the major difference between each one of them was on the matters "dealing with customary practice and local conditions rather than disputes primarily over the principles or methods. Each school developed its own practices, its own Sunnah…" (Rippen, 2005, p.91)

The authority for each of these schools of thought was traced back first to prominent scholars in the past, then to the companions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), and finally to the Prophet himself. The ultimate goal of each of these schools was to create a law which was Islamic and was justifiable by the Quran and Hadiths (Rippen, 2005). As the result of these different schools of thought, in the Islamic world today, different countries have taken a different approach towards the education of women based on the dominant school of thought of the country. This will be examined in detail in the next section of the

chapter. For the purposes of this paper, I will identify these traditional schools of thought as cultural/tribal and liberal.

The cultural/tribal interpretation is often the focus of media's interest in Islam and women's education. From a cultural/tribal perspective, the Taliban act on their traditional codes and customs and do not permit women to benefit from their Islamic right to education. However, as Ahmad (2003) states, "The Taliban were driven by their pukhtunwali or the code of pukhtuns. Their treatment of women and minorities has more to do more with pukhtunwali than Islam…" (p.142)

Given the complexities discussed above, Islam has laid out some guidelines and principles for women who are in pursuit of education. As we might anticipate, these are interpreted in ways which reflect preferences cultural/tribal or liberal. The following section will discuss these in detail.

3.3 Islam and guidelines for women pursuing education

Regardless of their schools of thought, Islamic scholars would agree that the guidelines and some of the restrictions placed by the Quran on women's public appearance and on her interactions with her male counterparts are for moral reasons. By setting these guidelines Islam as an organised religion, seeks to raise the moral quality of life for both men and women (Badawi, 1995). Thus, there are certain kinds of disciplines in social behaviour that have to be imposed to maintain a proper social life. However, these rules have been interpreted differently by the various scholars of Islam. The reason for the rise in the different interpretation of the Quranic text is due to the fact that some words in various parts of the Quran are not clearly stated. These words in Arabic tend to have various meanings. Thus, these words contain certain ambiguities, and the exact readings are hard to be attained. The discipline for interpreting the Quran called the 'tafsir' began in the early nineteenth century with the intention to clarify the text of the Quran in the light of contemporary understandings and conditions. According to Rippen (2005), the tafsir provides a verse by verse analysis and "every idea is documented by the transmission of the opinions" (p.41), which are

believed to have derived from Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and his close companions.

The restrictions that are placed by the Islamic law on women's public appearance are her dress code and her interaction with her male counterparts. Islam requires Muslim women to dress modestly and calls women to restrict the display of beauty and charm as it would make them the centre of attraction. The Quran says "Say to the believing men to lower their gazes and guard their chastity" (An-Nur: 30) "And say to the believing women to lower their gazes and guard their chastity, and let them not display of their charm - except what is apparent" (An-Nur: 31).

However, given what was in the above section, it is not surprising that there is controversy in the interpretation of this verse among the Muslim scholars. The actual reason for the rise in the controversy is in the difference of opinion regarding the word "apparent" in the verse. Scholars such as Imam Ibn Hanbil and Imam Ibn Shafi'i say that the word apparent points towards the outer garment of the women and support their argument by citing various Hadiths of the Prophet. However, Imam Malik and Imam Abu Hanifa believe that 'apparent' refers to the face and hands of the women. They believed that a woman should cover all her parts of the body except her face and hands, and supports their argument by various Hadiths as well.

Rippen (2005), states that the strictest commands regarding the veiling of the women are made when the Quranic statements are taken to its limit. This is because "full veiling institutes the Islamic attitude towards social interactions between men and women in its fullest degree in a manner that ensures that violations are extremely difficult" (Rippen, 2005, p.291).

On the contrary, few of the contemporary scholars are of the opinion that the veil is imposed on women by the Quran. Al-Hadad says that the Quran simply asks women for decency and does not ask the women to veil (Hussain, 1984). Another scholar such as Al-Albani says "we admit that the face is not one of the parts of the body to be covered, but it is not permissible for us to hold on to this taking into consideration the corruption of the modern age and the need to stop the

means for further corruption" (Doi, 1995, p.15). So according to him, women have to adopt the veil in order to prevent any corruption that might occur due to the male attraction towards them. On the other hand, the Muslim feminist Sharawi, an Egyptian, views the face veil as a barrier to women's advancement (cited in El-Guindi, 1999).

Islamic law also does not like the free intermingling of men and women. Kutty (2003) states that, God knows our nature better than ourselves, and thus He has prescribed appropriate rules of behaviour and appearance to be observed when men and women interact with one another in a social milieu. As Al-Hariri (1987) says, Islam has laid down rules and regulations regarding the movement, dress and speech of women, but it has nowhere expressly forbidden them to take part in economic, social or political activities.

Above, we have seen that women's rights and responsibilities are guaranteed under Islam, and that the interpretations of the Quran regarding the way women are supposed to dress are hotly debated. In many Muslim countries, these rights have been denied to women by the men. This is primarily because of their traditional attitude and not the religion of Islam (Al-Rubaiy & Al-Zubaidy, 1992). "Muslim societies have deviated from the Islamic precepts concerning so many aspects of their lives for so long. There is a wide gap between what Muslims are supposed to believe in and do and what they actually practice…" (El-Diwani, 2005, p. 29)

To examine women's education in the Muslim world, it is useful to look briefly at the women's educational experiences in selected Muslim countries. It will give us insights into variations in the different Muslim countries' interpretations of the Quran. If we examine what they have done to raise the education and literacy standards of their female population, we will better understand Islam's complex view of women's education. This will give us insights into which interpretation of Islamic teachings they are using as their guidelines when providing education for the women. It may be that they are buried under their cultural practices and tribal codes which usually deprive women of education and perceive them as house wives and child bearers.

3.4 Islamic countries' approaches to women education

The successes that few outstanding Muslim women achieved in the past through the education, which were described earlier, will do little to improve the lot of the majority of women. As Waines (1995) puts it, the contemporary Muslim women can only restore and assume their rightful place in the society through widespread education. Therefore it is important that one examines the situation of Muslim women and the education opportunities they are given in the Islamic countries today. This would also enable us to view the extents which Muslim educational policy developers manifest the Islamic teachings regarding the education of women. It will also provide insights into the different countries' approaches to public appearance of women.

According to Ahmad (2003) the educational level in the Islamic countries is among the lowest and especially the literacy level for women is rather alarming. This is because according to him, the scholars of the country are not allowed to play any part in the development of educational policies for these countries and are forced to remain silent. The women's population has suffered throughout the Islamic world due to the family and cultural norms of those countries which demand women to stay at homes (Hussain, 1984). Muslims are trapped in local or tribal codes and customs which do not allow women to benefit from the right to education promoted by the Quran (Ahmad, 2003). This is because many Muslim societies such as those extending from North Africa through to Middle East, to India and China, are a belt of classical patriarchal societies and "… in these societies descent, property and residence are governed through male line which has resulted in various traditional systems of control and subordination of women" (Waines, 1995, p.254).

In most Islamic countries compulsory educational laws have been enacted and have started to impact on the literacy rate of women (Hussain, 1984). Countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, follow strictly the guidelines of Islam regarding women going in pursuit of education. On the other hand, Egypt, encourages women to attain education, and has taken a liberal stance and interpretation of the Quran when providing education for the female population. Let us briefly

examine each one separately, for each will illustrate the tensions and complications of education of women in the Islamic countries.

In Saudi Arabia, formal education for women started after 1960. King Faisal supported women's right to achieve education (Al-Rubaiy & Al-Zubaidy, 1992; Hamadan, 2005). King Faisal understood the background and the traditional thinking of his people, and at the same time he saw the need to enlighten his people's understanding of Islamic teachings regarding women's education. Whenever he faced resistance he would ask "Is there anything in the Holy Quran which forbids the education of women?" He further stated, "We have no cause for argument, God enjoins learning on every Muslim man and women" (cited in Hamadan, 2005, p. 49).

The introduction of women's education in Saudi Arabia was not possible without the support of the religious scholars (Ulama) (Al-Rawaf & Simmons, 1991). The Ulama supported the education of women but only under certain strict conditions. Women had to go out to pursue education according to more conservative interpretations of the Quran and Hadiths, that is, in full hijab and completely segregated from men.

Therefore, even though in Saudi Arabia women were encouraged to attain an education, the schools and colleges were segregated by gender. Women's schools were surrounded by high walls and there were screens behind the entry doors. Each girl's school, college and university was assigned at least two men who were usually in their 50s or 60s. They were responsible for checking the identity of those who entered the school, to ensure that no male would enter those grounds (Hamadan, 2005).

For some time and even today in Saudi Arabia, at the age of nine the girls who were attending schools were required to wear the veil in public and to withdraw to female schools. This is Saudi Arabia's conservative interpretation of the Quran's request for women to guard their chastity. In Saudi Arabia, there are three options for girls who wanted to pursue higher education in that conservative environment.

First, some universities provided separate departments for women where the majority of women students studied. In some universities which did not have separate sections for women, but had degrees only available at those universities; women were enrolled as external students. This enabled the women to enrol in those degrees but not attend them physically. Third, the Saudi Arabian government provided women-only universities (Al-Hariri, 1987). Although at first glance these options might appear oppressive, ironically they improved female literacy. In 2002, the female literacy in Saudi Arabia was recorded to be at 50 percent and male literacy at 72 percent (Hamadan, 2005) which is very high compared to women's 25 percent literacy rate in 1978 (Hussain, 1984).

It seems that given safe, approved learning environments, women participated in education. As Shavarini's research found in Iran, before the Islamic revolution, there were families who did not want their girls to pursue education because their teachers would have been male. However, with the Islamic educational system and single sex institutions, more people were accepting and willing to send their girls to schools and colleges (Shavarini, 2003). Hence one can see that these conservative interpretations were not entirely negative. In fact, it resulted in some positive outcomes for the female population of the countries mentioned above.

Egypt,l unlike Saudi Arabia has taken a libera interpretation of the Islamic guidelines for women's education. The government in 1950 tried hard to overcome the tribal opposition to the education of girls and women (Al-Rubaiy & Al-Zubaidy, 1992). After the 1952 revolution in Egypt, laws were passed stating that boys and girls must be provided with equal opportunities at all stages of education. Co-education was also introduced as part of that education movement. This is in contrast to the more conservative interpretations of Islam (Hyde, 1978).

The Egyptian government developed scientific, technical, and vocational education, and re-organized the private education, and upgraded all facilities. The development of women's higher education has perhaps proved to be the most notable phenomenon of the post-1952 period. According to Merriam (1979), in Egypt women were found in all spheres of education such as in scientific research, industry, agriculture, trade, art, education, social service, medicine, the press law and other areas. Although this brief overview of these two countries is largely

historical, it does point out the complexities of women's education in countries with various interpretations of the Quran. It illustrates too the varied backgrounds which may be the 'home' contexts of our international Muslim women students.

In sum, up to this point we have seen that the religion Islam emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge and education. As evident in the Quran and Hadiths, women are required to get education and there are not restrictions or prohibitions against women's education. However, due to tribal/cultural rather than liberal interpretations of the Quran, some secular leaders restrict and prohibit women's education. These are often the stories selected by the Western media and they have shaped the views of people in the West about Islam. This view is strengthened by Muslim feminists, who expose the patriarchal and male elite interpretations of the Quran.

From the Islamic history in the past, one can see the great educational achievements of Muslim women. However, there are some restrictions placed by the Quran and the Hadiths on women going outside their house in pursuit of education. Again, these restrictions are interpreted differently by different male scholars and thus many Muslim countries have adopted many oppressive approaches to women's education based on their scholar's interpretations of the Quran.

3.5 Theorising the adjustments of international Muslim women into a New Zealand university

Given what we know about Muslim women and their education and the variety in the interpretation of the religious guidelines of the Quran and Hadiths regarding women and the acquisition of knowledge, we can expect a range of different adjustment issues for Muslim women coming into a Western university. This is because their adjustments could vary depending on their country of origin and the environment in which they received their education, that is, whether their country followed strict tribal guidelines regarding women's education or was more liberal.

The first adjustment which Muslim women students might have to make in an academic culture of a New Zealand university would concern their participation in the classroom. Since some of these women might have came from academic situations such as that of Saudi Arabia and Iran, then they might find it difficult to participate in the discussion groups or classrooms which consist of males and females. They would have to adjust to the fact that the New Zealand institutions and the classrooms are a mixture of males and females, and that they are required by the academic culture to be able to participate in the classroom and present their ideas. This does not mean that they would have to start mixing freely with the male students and have friendships with them. Since Islam discourages free mixing, students would have to be able to meet the requirements and the expectations of the teachers from their students in the classroom regardless of their gender and background yet give attention to their religion. The Muslim women students would need to adjust themselves to the male teachers if they did not have male teachers previously, and would need to approach them if they needed any help regarding their studies.

The second adjustment Muslim women student might have to make regarding their hijab (covering up). In some Islamic countries they are required to go out while in hijab, so they might have to adjust themselves to the fact that the institution they are entering might not be aware of the importance of their hijab. So they might have to make sure that the hijab did not become a barrier in their relationship with the students or the teachers. They might have to adjust to the teachers and the students who could be unfamiliar with the way Muslim women dress and their reasons for doing so.

These Muslim women students might have to adjust to the fact that in New Zealand culture, individuals make eye contact while one is in conversation with another or explaining something to others. Since some of them would have only encountered women in their classrooms and the teachers would have been women as well, they might find it hard to have an eye contact with the male teachers or fellow students. Thus they have to be able to make themselves able to make eye contact.

The fourth adjustment for these students could relate to their interaction with the local students. This includes the non-international resident students of the university. This might be the hardest adjustment for some of the international students especially in case of the male students. As explained above, some of these women might have little or no interaction with males back in their home countries. So when they are in Western institutions they might have to work hard to be confident enough to interact with them regarding study matters.

3.6 Refined Research Question

Given the literature review, critique and the discussion, my refined research question is: What are the views of Muslim international women students about their adjustments to a New Zealand university?

Summary

In conclusion, this chapter firstly described the position of Islam in relation to education in general. It was evident that Islam encourages its followers to pursue education regardless of their gender and holds those in pursuit of education in very high esteems. Islam wants every believer to have wisdom and broad intellectual knowledge as well as a good education in religion. There are many Hadiths and Quranic verses that direct Muslim to attain education.

Secondly, this chapter explored women's education in Islam in particular. Islamic law was first to grant women full rights and was ahead of other legal systems including, that of the west. Looking at the history of Muslim women, one can find great scholars who achieved enormously from their right to education. The Quran and the Hadiths has repeatedly asked women to become educated as they are the builders of the society. The current encouragement of female education by Islamic countries however could be influenced by various elements. For example, Islam's current encouragement of women's education could also be shaped by economic and political variables. The first of such variables are the "Millennium Development Goals" which require all its signatories' countries to develop female

education in their countries if they are to receive economical and political help from already developed countries.

However due to different interpretations of the Islamic scholars of the verses of the Quran, Muslim people cultural and tribal codes, in many Muslim countries women are deprived of their right to education. This thus makes Western nations and media to question the religion instead of the Muslims.

Thirdly, this chapter presented Islam and guidelines for women pursuing education. Even though Islam encourages women to pursue education, it also sets some guidelines. For example, Islam requires women to guard their chastity hence they are asked to wear proper dress code when going in pursuit of education. They are also encouraged to not intermingle freely with the males when they are in social situation.

The chapter then outlined different Islamic countries' approaches to women education. It was seen that countries who had followed strict interpretations of the Quran, ironically it had improved the female literacy rate for example countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. Whereas there are countries who take liberal approach to the interpretations of the Quran and thus provide co-education as well.

The chapter then presented the theorisation based on Muslim women and the knowledge gained from the information regarding Islam and the different interpretations regarding women education. There are many adjustments that Muslim women have to make such as adjustment to the academic culture. They would have to adjust to teacher/student relationship and also adjust their interaction with males. They might also have to adjust their hijab and eye contact with male teachers or classmates.

This chapter also described the refined research question based on the information retrieved from chapter two 'literature review' and the information gained from this chapter.

Chapter 4   **Research Design**

Introduction

The research design is used to structure the research and it holds all the elements in a research project together (Trochim, 2006). It also shows how all the major parts of the research project work together in order to address the research question. The way the study is carried out is crucial to the research because it is the systematic investigation which helps in finding out answers to a problem. Thus, a naturalistic approach was taken for my study as it emphasised the importance of the subjective experiences of individuals, with a focus on qualitative analysis (Burns, 2000).

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to describe the method of research design used for the purpose of carrying out the study. In this chapter, I will first discuss the qualitative approach of my research and describe its advantages. Second, I will explain the data collection method including the technique, the process and the respondents in my research. Third, I will describe the data analysis methods and the ethical issues concerning this study. Finally, I will outline some of the limitations to this study. These are congruent with my refined research question: What are the views of Muslim international women students about their adjustments to a New Zealand university? I will conclude this chapter with a brief summary.

4.1 The qualitative approach

The two main research techniques used in carrying out a research are the quantitative and qualitative research approaches. They both use different methods in finding out about the social reality, but the qualitative method uses more interactive ways of collecting data and the data is presented in a descriptive manner instead of a numerical form (Stalker, 1989).

The qualitative approach covers several forms of inquiries. As Merriam (1988) explains, this helps in understanding and explaining the meaning of social phenomena with little disruption of the natural setting. Since human elements have become increasingly recognized as critical and determining factors in defining the truth and knowledge, therefore, the qualitative approach of investigation tends to be based on recognizing the importance of the subjective, experiential 'life world' of humans (Burns, 2000). It attempts to understand individual's definitions, descriptions and meanings of the events. Qualitative research provides a voice to those who have previously been unheard or deliberately ignored. As Schostak (2002) says "the object is to empower those who have traditionally lacked it (a voice), and to curtail the abuse of power of those who have traditionally been able to exercise it" (p.175).

The three main strengths of the qualitative approach thus include understanding the viewpoints of an individual, providing respondents with a voice and allowing the researchers to gather 'thick' data. These are all important to my research question and are explained below.

Firstly, the qualitative research is concerned with understanding the individuals' viewpoints and their perceptions of the world and finding out about what is on the individuals' mind (Bell, 1999; Best & Kahn, 1998). Because humans are conscious of their own behaviours, thoughts, and feelings, their perceptions are important. Qualitative research inquiry locates the observers in the world and describes and clarifies the observers' experiences as it appears in their lives (Yeh & Inman, 2007).

Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings as they attempt to make sense of a phenomena or interpret a phenomena in terms of meanings people bring with them (Davies, 2007). They capture "what people say and do as a product of how they interpret the complexity of their world" (Burns, 2000, p.11). Thus, for qualitative researchers the study of participants' knowledge and their practices form the investigation (Flick, 2006).

Secondly, the qualitative approach allows the respondents to speak for themselves and thus, gives them a voice. This is because the qualitative method is concerned with the truth as the informants perceive it rather than with the objective truth (Burns, 2000). In the qualitative inquiry, the researcher paints a picture in a way that facilitates the voice of the participants to be heard and for others to reflect on it (Bishop, 1997). The researchers try to give attention to the original voices of the participants so that there is a broader view of the social reality in their research (Schratz, 1993).

The third strength of qualitative research is that it allows for gathering data which gives a rich and thick description regarding the focus question. This is because in the qualitative method there is no intention to count or quantify the findings. Rather, findings are described in the language employed during the research process (Carr, 1994). Qualitative research does not ordinarily involve the reduction of data into numbers. Because the qualitative technique uses the researcher as an active data collection instrument (Stalker, 1989; Yeh & Inman, 2007), the flexible and probing inquiry used in the qualitative method allows the researchers to process information as they hear it and ask for clarification and correction in order to achieve higher levels of understanding (Stalker, 1989).

4.2 Data collection method

4.2.1 The Technique

Interviewing is one of the major methods used in qualitative research to collect data. The purpose of interviewing is to obtain what Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as the 'here and now' construction of a person's feelings, motivations, claims and concerns. The face to face encounter during the interview between the researcher and the participants allows for the understanding of the lives, experiences or situations through the informant's perspective (Burns, 2007; Davies, 2007). Hence in my study, the data were collected through semi-structured interviews in which the questions, probes and prompts are written in the form of a flexible interview guide (Crabtree & Miller, 1992), (see Appendix

C). It enables participants and researchers to raise and pursue issues and matters that might not have been included in a pre-devised schedule (Cohen, et al, 2000).

The other advantages of using semi-structured interviews as described by Burns (2000) are that "the informants use language natural to them rather than trying to understand and fit into the concepts of the study; the informants have equal status to the researcher in the dialogue rather than being a guinea pig" (p.425). The most important aspect of the interview is its flexibility (Cohen et al, 2000), which helps the researcher to ask for additional information when a response seems incomplete or not entirely relevant (Best & Kahn, 1998; Burns, 2000).

The questions in the interview were formulated as a result of information contained in the literature review and the theorizing of the literature (see Appendix C). The interviewing thus provided me with insights into the meaning and significance of participants' viwes.

4.2.2 The process

The semi-structured interviews were one hour long. Since I knew most of the international Muslim women studying in the University of Waikato, I asked them to meet me on the University campus, in the Muslim prayers room. I briefly explained to them the purpose and nature of my study and handed out the letter which explained the research (see Appendix A). I requested them to give me their names if they were interested in taking part in the study.

Once I collected the names of the women who showed their interest in taking part in the study, I contacted them by telephone and asked each of them to individually meet me in the library study room on selected days and times (when the rooms were available) for the interview. Prior to the interview, each participant was given the consent form (see Appendix B) which outlined the research and its ethical considerations. They were then asked to sign the consent forms in my presence and I kept a copy and they were given a copy.

The interviews were tape recorded because, as Burns (2000) states, it enables the researcher to take part in the conversation in a natural way. Tape recording also allows for recording the responses accurately and completely. According to Bell (2005), "tape-recording can be useful to check the wording of any statement…to allow you to keep an eye contact with your interviewer, to help you look interested and to make sure that what you write is accurate"(p.164). In addition to tape recording the interviews, I also took hand written notes.

Validity and reliability are the two concepts which must be addressed within the data collection method. The concept of validity is described by a wide range of terms in qualitative studies. Golafshani (2003) says validity is affected by the researcher's perception and his/her choice of paradigm assumption. Thus, researchers have adopted other terms such as quality, rigor and trustworthiness when they discuss validity in their qualitative research.

In qualitative research the validity of a research project is greater when the interview is based on a carefully designed structure. This will enable the researcher to elicit the significant information (Best & Kahn, 1998). Hence for this research project, an organized and semi-structured interview was conducted. Validity as described by Stalker (1989) is concerned with the accuracy of the research findings. If the findings authentically represent the inquiry, then internal validity is said to exist.

The sources of bias to the validity of the research are thought to be:

> "The attitudes, opinions and expectations of the interviewer; a tendency for the interviewer to seek answers that support her preconceived notions; misinterpretations on the part of the interviewer of what the respondent is saying; misunderstanding on the part of the respondent of what is being asked"
>
> (Cohen et al, 2000, p. 121).

Therefore, to make sure that there is no bias to the validity, before the interview I tried neither to form any answers to my focus questions nor to have any specific expectations about the respondents' views.

Reliability on the other hand, addresses how accurately the research methods and techniques produce data. It also looks at the design problem of the research (Best & Kahn, 1998; Stalker, 1989). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that "since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability]" (cited in Golafshani, 2003, p.602). Given the above, in order to check the reliability of the research, I often restated the questions I had formed in a slightly different manner at a later stage in the interview. As the results of the study seemed similar it can be said that the research is reliable.

4.2.3 The respondents

For this research project in keeping with the focus of the study, I interviewed Muslim international women who were taking either their undergraduate or postgraduate studies, in the various Schools of the University of Waikato. This enabled me to recruit respondents who came from different Muslim countries, and gave a broader insight to understand the views of these various individuals. This is helpful because Muslim women's adjustment issues could differ from one another depending on their cultural and educational backgrounds, which vary in Muslim countries. The respondents for the study had arrived in New Zealand on students visas. They had to have been in New Zealand for at least six months and for fewer than 5 years. I hoped that the experiences and the adjustments these individuals had to make in New Zealand and the University of Waikato, would be fresh in their minds compared to those who had been here for more than five years. These students were in the age group of 18 to 29 years

Since the Muslim women community is a very small one on the campus, and in order to keep the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents, I gave them pseudo names in this study and deliberately obscured their degrees, their ages and their countries of origin. This should protect the true identity of the respondents. The following is a brief description of the five respondents I interviewed for my research study.

Maria is from a Middle Eastern country. She is a very calm and determined person. She has been in New Zealand and in the University of Waikato for less than three years. She is doing a preparatory course at the university and is living with her mother and siblings. According to her, the reason for her choosing New Zealand as a destination for her studies was because of her friends' recommendations. They told her that it was a good place for Muslim women to study as there is not much 'trouble' as is in other European countries. The reason for her to prefer Waikato University is that it is best known for the School in which she hopes to enrol in the future.

Nida who is a very chatty person, comes from a Gulf country. However, her country of birth is in Asia. She chose to come to New Zealand because of her sister's recommendation. Nida has finished high school back home (which was in English), and was in the first year of her Bachelor's degree. However, when her sister praised the education system of New Zealand, Nida changed her mind and came here to study instead. She has been in New Zealand for fewer than two years.

Sobia is the only post graduate student whom I interviewed for my study and she is a friendly and a talkative person. She has been in New Zealand for less than a year and comes from an eastern Asian country as a scholarship student. According to her, the scholarship provided only two choices of destination, either to go to Australia or New Zealand. Sobia said she chose New Zealand because she had heard that there is a lot of racism in Australia. She was also in Australia before, so for her New Zealand was a preferred choice. The University of Waikato was recommended by the government because of the high quality of the courses in her specialty area.

Sana, with a very quiet personality comes from a Gulf country as well, and has been in New Zealand for more than three years. She is currently doing her first year of a Bachelors degree. She came here as part of a scholarship the government was providing to students and thus had no choice in selecting the country. She had finished high school a long time ago, back home, and when the opportunity

arrived for her to carry on with a higher degree through the scholarship, she took that step.

Farah is also from a Gulf country and is a very confident and out going person. She has been in New Zealand for more than three years. She is currently in her first year of a Bachelors Degree and came to Waikato University as part of the scholarship provided by her government. She has also finished high school back home nut has not been able to go to university for personal reasons. Now since she was provided with an opportunity to receive higher education, she decided to pursue further education.

4.3 Data analysis method

In qualitative research, data analysis is an ongoing activity and is primarily inductive (Maykut & Morehouse, 2001). When a researcher accumulates a subset of data and when different aspects of the phenomena under study begin to emerge, the researcher then has to begin analysing the data. Since, for my study I used interviews as a data collecting method, I transcribed verbatim the data soon after the interviews finished. This transcription allowed translation of the interview from an oral to a written form (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

For the transcription I used different colour fonts for each respondent so that I could differentiate among the participants' responses. Once I completed the transcripts, I gave a copy of the transcript to each of the participants so that they could edit or adjust them. This was because if no transcription is done and made available for the scrutiny then the interviewer may say what s/he likes (Bell, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Hence, some of the respondents did make changes to their transcription but they were editorials to grammatical rather than substantive changes to content or meaning. I used the edited transcript for my analysis.

Analysis of the data is important once one does the interviews because this provides an opportunity for the researchers to shift, focus and probe more deeply in particular areas. Hence, the analysis of the data required me to read the transcripts many times before I began to find major themes that seemed to emerge

from the analysis. As described by Yeh and Inman (2007) qualitative data analysis involves reading and rereading of the data with the expectation of finding core ideas and deeper levels of meaning. The next step in the data analysis required me to find themes and patterns, describe instances, and classify data into categories so that a broader interpretation of the data was done (Aronson, 1994; Maykut & Morehouse 2001; Yeh & Inman, 2007).

Themes can be identified by "bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone"(Aronson, 1994, p.1). The themes represented the informants' stories as they were pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective thoughts and experiences. Hence, to find the major themes from the transcripts, I highlighted (in different colours) the statements and quotes of the participants that seemed relevant to each of the emerging themes.

The following diagram, which I created, summarises the research process mentioned above:

The Qualitative Research Process

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          ┌─────────────────────────────┐
          │  Refined Research Question  │
          └─────────────────────────────┘
                        ↓
          ┌─────────────────────────────┐
          │      Interview Design       │
          └─────────────────────────────┘
                        ↓
          ┌─────────────────────────────┐
    ┌────▶│      Data Collection        │────┐
    │     └─────────────────────────────┘    │
    │                  ↓                      │
    │     ┌─────────────────────────────┐    │
    │     │      Data Management         │    │
    │     └─────────────────────────────┘    │
    │                  ↓                      │
    │     ┌─────────────────────────────┐    │
    └─────│       Data Analysis         │◀───┘
          └─────────────────────────────┘
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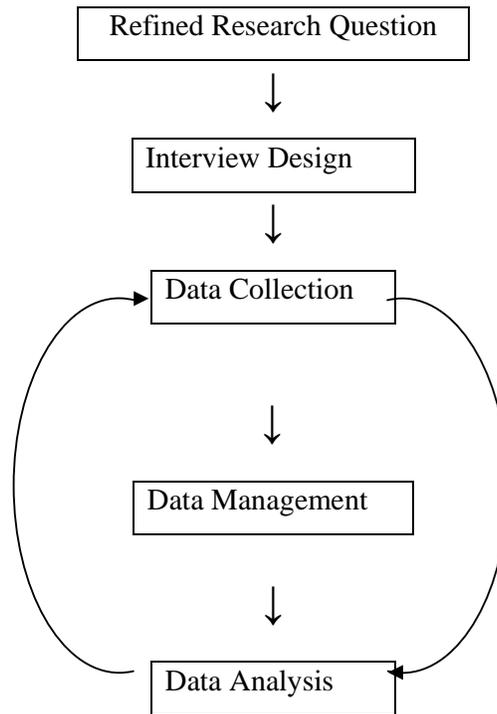
Fig. 1. Summary of the qualitative research process of this study

4.4 The ethical issues

There were two major ethical issues concerned with this study: power relations and the participants' right to privacy and confidentiality. Qualitative research requires a strong relationship between the interviewer and the participants but the interviewer and interviewee's perceptions of social, cultural and personal differences can have an impact on the power relationship in the interview. As Tang (2002) states, "the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship" (p.704).

The power relation between the researcher and the participants may relate to gender, age, class, ethnicity or race. According to May (2002), the power relation occurs due to the fact that in general the researchers conduct their research on groups and individuals who are less privileged than themselves. In the interview, the power relation can take place as the interview itself can be a strategy controlled by the researcher and as Bishop (1997) says it can be repressive of the views or position of the participants.

Thus, as a researcher, I kept the ethical issue of power relation in mind. Since I am in the same age group as the respondents, and I am a graduate student and fluent in English compared to some of the women, I had to create a rapport while remaining aware of the possibility of my ability to dominate the interview. In order to create a 'power excluded' environment for my interview before conducting the interviews I talked to these women about suggesting a place where the interview could take place. Before the interview began, I 'warmed up' the situation of the interview by asking general questions which were related to these students. The participants were given plenty of time to answer the questions and expand their answers, without me interrupting them or showing that I could not understand their English.

The second ethical issue relates to confidentiality and privacy; that is, assuring the participants that the information shared during the interview process and their identity will remain private and confidential (Howe & Moses, 1999). Confidentiality is a promise that the participants will not be identified by the readers of the research or presented in the research in an identifiable form (Bell, 2005; Cohen et al, 2000; Diener & Crandall, 1978). It is extremely important during the research that the responses of the participants are confidential so that the reader of the research would not be able to deduce the identity of the individuals. The right to privacy is an important right "enshrined in international (UN Declaration of Human Rights) and national legislations…individuals should decide what aspects of their personal lives, attitudes, habits, eccentricities, fears and guilt are to be communicated to other" (Burns, 2000, p. 21). The participants are required to understand the nature and purpose of the research and thus give their consent to participate without any coercion.

As a researcher I made sure that I did preserve each individual's right to privacy and confidentiality. Before beginning the interviews, the participants were told the interview process would be private and their identity would be kept confidential. They were given a form to sign in which they were assured their right to privacy and anonymity (see Appendix B). The interviews were conducted in a private place in this case in the library study rooms, so that no one else except the interviewer heard the conversation. The informants seemed to only share personal information with which they felt comfortable for example one of the interviewee was asked a question and as she did not want to respond to it, the question was passed.

As soon as the interview took place, I gave the participants pseudo names. These are used through out this thesis. In the study, the participant's general information is used and no specific details are given about each one of them which could help in identifying the person.

4. 5 Limitations of this study

This study does have its limitations. This is because of the timeframe in which the study took place. Since I am doing a Masters in education and a four paper thesis, I was given only 52 weeks to complete the whole research. In the given time I could only take a 'snapshot' of the situation at a specific location for the study, that is, I could only discuss the adjustment problems of international Muslim students who were at the University of Waikato. Also due to lack of time, I was not able to go back and ask further questions of the respondents. I was not able to clarify some ambiguous sentences or to probe deeply into unexpected areas.

Another limitation of this study is that it only investigates the adjutsment these international women face inside university. It does not investigate the social problems they have faced or face outside the university setting such as the community. Such a broader concern was beyond the limits of this study.

This study might also have been limited because of the power issue that was present between me as a researcher and the respondents. As I wear hijab and long dresses instead of pants, there is a possibility that these respondents might have felt intimidated by me during their responses in the interview. These Muslim women might have seen themselves as more 'liberal' Muslims compared to me and hence it might have impacted on the ways in which they responded to some of the questions.

Summary

In summary, this chapter outlines the qualitative method used for the purpose of this study. It describes the advantages of the qualitative method which is an interactive way of collecting the data. It looks into the social reality through the participants' perspective and provides the participants with voice. The data gathered through the qualitative method is thick and it deals with language rather than numbers.

Second, the chapter describes the data collection method used in this study which was a semi-structured interview. The interview questions used in the interview resulted from the literature reviewed and from theorizing the literature. This section also describes the respondents involved in the study. Third, the chapter outlines the data analysis method which in this study's case was transcribing verbatim the audio taped interviews. Once the interviews were transcribed, major themes that seemed to emerge were identified. This section also describes the ethical issues involved while conducting the study. The power relation between the interviewer and the respondents was kept in mind and confidentiality and privacy were dealt with by using pseudo names for the respondents during the data analysis and throughout the study.

Finally, the chapter presented the key limitations to this study which were mostly related to the time constrains under which the study took place.

Chapter 5   **Selected Findings**

Introduction

In qualitative research, once the data have been collected, the findings have to be analysed in order to understand the social reality through the respondents' perspectives. The analysis of the data also enables the researchers to find the major themes that emerge from the interview with the respondents. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) state that the interview analysis "amounts to systematically grouping and summarising the descriptions, and providing a coherent organising framework that encapsulates and explains aspects of the social world that respondents portray" (p.79)

The purpose of this chapter is to present and make available the interview data and the statements made by the participants involved in the research through key themes. The five women involved in the interview were asked to respond to the questions related to my focus question: What are the views of Muslim international women students about their adjustments to a New Zealand university?

There are four major themes apparent from the interviews. The four themes that Muslim international women students identified as the key to adjustment to a New Zealand university are, 'Adjustment is no big deal for me', 'People need to learn about Islam and Muslims', 'I need to learn proper English to communicate' and 'It is my responsibility to adjust'. These four themes do overlap but for the purpose of this chapter, they are treated as separate categories. This chapter will conclude with a summary of the chapter.

5.1   Theme 1: Adjustment is no big deal for me

From the interviews with the Muslim international women it became apparent that most of these students believed they did not have to make huge adjustments into the academic and socio-cultural environment of the University. For them, adjustment

process involved range of adaptations that is; they did not change much about themselves or their surroundings but still tried to fit into the new environment through understanding and learning. In this theme, there seems to be four major sub-themes. The first sub-theme 'It doesn't change my basic beliefs' discusses international students' understanding of adjustment. The second sub-theme 'Our education system is similar to here' elaborates on the similarity between the two academic cultures that is the 'home' culture and the New Zealand culture. The third sub-theme is 'The adjustments I've had to make are positive' and the fourth theme 'It's New Zealand! I expect to do my hijab differently' deals with adapting the hijab according to the new culture.

5.1.1   It doesn't change my basic beliefs

When these students were asked what they believed adjustment in a New Zealand environment meant for them, most of their responses showed that they did try to make sure they fit into the new environment and to the culture of New Zealand but they also tried to keep their cultural and religious beliefs. As Sana put it, adjustment is a process in which "… you fit yourself into a society (through) respecting other people's culture." For her it was important that she maintains her identity, that is, maintain her cultural beliefs and religious beliefs while going through the process of adjustment. According to her one has to adapt oneself to the new culture but in ways that do not effect "my belief(s) (and) my way(s) of thinking." For her, it was important that in the process of adjustment one keeps their identity through

> …trying to give a good (impression) about my own culture and belief (s)
> and uh… (through adapting to the new environment in such manner that)
> doesn't effect me personally or doesn't like effect other people, (especially)
> the way they think about me.

Most of the respondents seemed to view the adjustment process as something that one gets used to overtime. As Maria said: "… You get used to the new culture, the way people live in that place." Farah agreed and added: "…But during the time we change, (and) we learn about people in New Zealand (and) we learn about other cultures."

Even though the respondents believed adjustment to the new environment happened over time, they also pointed out that they had to adapt themselves to the new culture to 'fit in' to the new culture. However, they did not want to go beyond their comfort level. As Maria explained:

…You have to.. ah.. behave.. um.. in a way that suit(s) the life there. And also the way(s) you feel comfortable with. ah.. so there are a lot of things that you have to adjust to because you can find (that) there are a lot of things that are different from your (own) country.

On the other hand, for Nida the adjustment process was easier since she lived with her relatives

When I came here.. ah.. I found it really interesting, it was very easy to (adjust).. ah.. I mean it took sometime for me to adjust and to go out and catch a bus, and find a bus stop. I wasn't used to, you know, looking at the signs on the roads. That's my adjustment as an individual (and) as an international student

5.1.2 Our education system is similar to here

When these women were asked about their adjustment to the academic life of the New Zealand University, it appeared that most of them came from similar educational background to that present in New Zealand university. They revealed that there were only slight shifts between the education systems. Overtime and through observation, they did manage to understand these differences and adapt themselves to them and thus were not required to go through traumatic adjustment process. As described by Farah:

… I think (there) are not that difference(s). 'Cause, like (back home) we have Britain (education) system as well as New Zealand (education system). Yeah, in our country like it's okay like we study with boys and our teachers (are) men (just) like in New Zealand. And we do assignments; we do exams

and test (s) like same as New Zealand. But in my country everyone is from my country, but in New Zealand its co-culture. So, it's good to learn from other people and to know other cultures.

Hence for Farah, the multi-cultural environment of the classrooms in the New Zealand university, is something positive as it allows for understanding different culture values and beliefs which did not seem to be possible in her own country, as all the students came from similar cultural backgrounds.

Similarly, Nida who also comes from a similar educational background found very few differences to which she had to adapt for example;

…. The only new thing for me here (in the education system) was the APA reference(ing) which I had never done before. And like especially what the course demands like my course demands like reflective thinking, critical thinking, (and) thinking outside the square. We had very similar approaches but we didn't go into very depth in schools.

Later in the interview, Nida also pointed out that the teaching styles in the New Zealand University are also similar to that of her country "…the way the teacher explains and the interactive classrooms like (back home) the teacher and the student(s) have a good communication and we do a lot of activities which help enhance our learning". Therefore, from the point of view there was not much to adjust to in the New Zealand academic environment.

In contrast, Maria who comes from a different educational background found that there were differences in both the education systems. However, she believed that it was easier for her to adjust to them once she observed those differences and did not resist them. This seemed to be because even though she had interacted with male teachers and classmates back home, she had to observe and practice it in New Zealand. As she observed, after all, "…this is the way of education in here (New Zealand)."

Later in the interview she provided an example of one of the differences in both systems. For example she was used to having a very formal relationship with her teachers but upon her arrival to New Zealand, she found that the relationship between both was different but that was something she learnt quickly and did not take long to adjust to

> …Here most of the teachers you don't call them by their sir name(s). I just noticed this thing when I came here... How students... How they behave with the teachers and these things so it wasn't a big adjustment that I had to make.

5.1.3 The adjustments I've had to make are positive

Even though the respondents tended to describe similarities between the education system of the New Zealand University and that of their countries, the differences which they noticed were something they liked hence did not view it as a problem. These are discussed under separate headings below.

i. New Zealand has more comfortable teacher/ student relationships

The first of these positive adjustments was the relationship between the teachers and students in New Zealand universities. Sobia excitedly described that the positive difference she found was in the interaction and in the relationship between the lecturers/supervisors and the students.

> … Back home, the lecturers and the students cannot meet well…You need to have more respect (for) your lecturers…Teacher/lecturer is someone who have (has) high level of education. They should receive a certain respect from us (the students)... But here it's quite different. Actually it's quite good because I mean when we mix more with the students it means that (the lecturers) know what the students want. But back in my country, they have certain differences. The lecturer didn't seem to know what actually the students want…

Nida also seemed very happy about the adjustments she had to make. She noted with pleasure the availability of the teachers when students required help. She said "…I really like it (laughs). It's kind of different because teachers are more available and you can contact them by emails…"

ii.   New Zealand made me an independent person!

Many of these international students' felt that New Zealand had taught that many positive experiences and made them positive and better individuals. For example, from the conversation with many of these women it seemed that they were extremely happy and had a positive attitude as they became "…independent." (Farah, Maria and Sana) This thus made them more 'confident' individuals and hence they could approach people that is, students and teachers, more easily when they required help or needed to communicate with them. One can see how excited and happy some of these students felt from the below examples;

"…. Back home I was very dependent… now I can catch the bus by myself and I can go around different areas by myself!" (Maria)

"…because I am far away from my family, I can do everything by myself… I can travel by myself; I can communicate with people…" (Farah)

iii.   New Zealand made me a better Muslim

Some of these students also felt that they had become "better Muslims…" (Sobia) as a result of being in New Zealand. This was because the questioning of students and teachers regarding their religious beliefs made them do research. This helped them in return as well because it made them think about their religious practices and improve on them.

iv.   New Zealand allowed me to learn and practice English

Another positive adjustment identified by some of these women was their ability to practice the "English language and learn English easily…" (Farah), as they were

among English speaking people. Back home they did not have the opportunity to converse in regular basis which is important for both speaking and improving one's listening.

v.   I am able to make friends

Some participants also identified that the positive adjustment they had to make to the learning and teaching styles in the New Zealand academic culture allowed them to make friends. As Sana said:

> … Here (In New Zealand) there is more (emphasis on) group work. Also, you (are) doing more practical things like you need to do research. But still it's interesting, and give(s) you like… You can make friends… Which is (a) new experience and that is really (a) good one.

5.1.4 It's New Zealand! I expect to do my hijab differently

The Muslim women were asked about their hijab (the way of dressing) and whether they had to make any adjustments (in terms of their hijab) to fit to the university's academic or socio-cultural environment. Most of them did confessed that the way they do hijab is different to how they used to do it back home, but they believed that it was due to the fact that they were in a new culture.

Sana, who was wearing her head scarf, said that the reason she was not wearing the abaya (long loose dress usually black in colour, which fully covers one's body) because "I try to like wear things that it can look normal…you need to fit in the culture. I do things so that not just people need to accept me but I need to accept them…" (sic). Later during the conversation she pointed out that there is a need for her to be "… more understanding…"

Maria's showed similar remarks and she preferred not to wear her abaya or cover her face as she used to do back home. She had adapted her clothing and wore pants and long shirts as her daily dressing but still wore the head scarf. As she explained:

I do my hijab different because if you do it here in the same way that I (used to do) in my country, then it will be difficult for me (even) to pass (on the street as) no body will recognise me… the way you wear your hijab (has) to be like not totally different from other(s) (so that) people (does not) notice you more…you have to keep your hijab, keep your religion, but also in way (s) that you can adjust to the environment.

Sobia who also preferred to wear pants and shirt with the head scarf said that it was due to the fact that she has to work in a lab "…it's not advisable to wear skirt because, there are lots of chemicals (in the labs) and I (might) fall down, so it's (wearing pants is) easier".

5.2 <u>Theme 2:</u> People need to learn about Islam and Muslims

The second theme which seemed to emerge from the interviews was the need for increased understanding of New Zealand's teachers' and students' about the religion Islam and the cultural beliefs of international Muslim students. This according to the respondents can be attained through two means which are the sub-themes of this section. The first sub-theme is 'Teachers and students should do their own research'. The second sub-theme "I can teach you about Islam and Muslims" deals with improving the understanding of teachers and students through Muslim students' explanation and efforts.

5.2.1 Teachers and students should do their own research

During the interview some women pointed out that the teachers' and the students' understanding and knowledge of the Muslim students' culture and religion would have made the international students' adjustment process to the academic and socio-cultural life of university even smoother. As Sana said

My lecturers and my teachers didn't know much about my culture, so I know there will be mistake(s) and misunderstanding(s)…I get upset, I mean they are (the) lecturers and (the) teachers (they are) suppose(d) to have certain knowledge about other cultures because as you know there are many

cultures in Waikato. So they need to have some knowledge to know how to deal with (international) students.

She gave an example of how her lecturer's lack of knowledge of her culture and religion affected her personally and academically "it was really hard. I couldn't deal with the way he (the teacher) (was) talking, like (he was) more racism (racist). That affected me. I couldn't go to (the) class…"

Later in the interview, Sana said that teachers' knowledge of their students builds a better teacher/student relationship "… I mean there are certain rules and expectations from other cultures. So you (the teachers) need to be aware of that, so that (it) will make strong relations (between the student and the teachers)."

Farah had similar views. According to her, when the teachers and students were aware of cultural sensitivities of other cultures, then they seemed to accept them more compared to those who lacked cultural understanding. She gave the following examples

> … Some people have background (knowledge) about other cultures, other religions but some people (don't) not. For example; two weeks ago one Maori guy said, 'Hey, this mask you are wearing, (pointing towards the head scarf) where you bought it from?' I said 'What?' (Shocked) He said 'Oh nothing'…But other people they know. Two or three of my teachers know about Islam. They know that in this month, like, we are fasting. They try to make it easy (ier) for us. I have a Malaysian friend. She has tutorial from 4pm to 6pm but she came to the tutor and said that iftar (when one breaks their fast) time is at 6pm. She said 'Yeah yeah yeah I know. You can attend 2pm to 4pm class.

5.2.2 I can teach you about Islam and Muslims

The Muslim women revealed that for them it was helpful for their adjustment process when they explained about their culture and religion to both the teachers and students. According to them, the local students seemed to appreciate the

international Muslim women and their differences once they had the understanding and knowledge about their religious and cultural beliefs. Nida said that

> If anyone have questions about why I am wearing the hijab, or fasting in the month of Ramadan, I mean it's better to spread out the word (by explaining to them). If everyone knows it's better than keeping them in darkness. That's what I feel. I enjoyed it, yeah really and they were co-operative. But .. ah .. some were moving away but I don't mind. I was flexible, I was cool about it.

Sobia found that people who understood about her religion seemed to respect her beliefs.

> … Sometimes when I pray in the park, some times they walk slowly and (do) not interrupt us. They respect us and they know we are praying, but sometimes I also (notice) that they always like to go fast in their car(s).

Farah agreed with Sobia and said:

> … They respect us. They ask us 'Why you wearing hijab? Are you allowed to show us your hair?'…So sometimes I go to (the) toilet and I show the girls my hair". Sana had similar views " (The) problem with people here (is that) they don't know. So once they know they can understand. They can understand and they can respect you.

5.3 <u>Theme 3:</u> I need to learn proper English to communicate

In the third theme, these international women students identified that it was important to overcome the language barrier otherwise they would not be able to meet the academic requirements properly. The two sub-themes that are apparent under this section deal with 'Lack of language causes problems' and 'I have strategies to overcome the language barrier'. The first sub-theme deals with the problems caused by the language barrier and the second sub-theme explains the step by step strategy to overcome the language barrier.

5.3.1 Problems are caused by the language barrier

Difficulties with the English language placed a barrier between the international students' interaction with the local students and also to their contribution to class or group discussions. Sana gave an example of how she felt different when she was interacting with the local students "…sometimes it's really annoying because I am not (a) native speaker and you are (a) second language (speaker). It makes you upset. The way they think about you, you can feel it".

The respondents tended to say that they might understand the language but when it came to writing or speaking, they felt reluctant to participate. For example, Sobia said:

> … Back home I use my language but here you need to use full English. I mean I really don't contribute to the discussions I like to listen and think about it and rather not say anything…sometimes I don't know what they are doing…

Sana had similar views and said that even though she had many ideas to present in the discussion, the reason for her non contribution was because she found it hard to "connect her ideas" in the English language. On the other hand, Sobia who was used to learning through the English medium said that:

> I had to adjust to the Kiwi colloquialism over here…I am exposed more to the American and British colloquial terms. And I really, I mean I had to question a lot like 'What do you mean by that?' Like earlier (back home), we usually greet (in English) by (saying) 'How are you?' And in here it's like 'How is it going?' First time I heard that I was like 'Sorry what is going?' (Laughs) And later I realise (d) okay it means 'How are you?' ...

5.3.2 I have strategies to overcome the language barrier

It seemed respondents tried to build a step by step strategy to improve their English, that is, through making friends from different cultural backgrounds and then

making friendship with the Kiwi students. Conversing in the English language helped them to practice the language and thus improved their understanding as well as speech. Sana identified that the first step in her strategy was to make friends with the non-English speaking students who were studying with her in the Language Institute.

> … (through) talking with other classmates because I know they are better than me. I got (have) some friends, like Chinese, Japanese, they are good with grammar. So I like to share with others as a group. So that helps (in my English learning).

The second step in the strategy involved making friends with native speakers (Kiwi and Maori) once they had made friends with the second language speakers. As Farah pointed out

> When I came to uni, I joined groups from different nationalities. Because, (in the) Foundation Studies (classes) people were not native speaker(s), so I started talking to Chinese, Japanese, and Taiwanese (students). And then (for) the second step, I joined like Maori and Kiwi people, which (are) like totally different than other (non English speaking students). Other nationalities are same like us, like, they (are) second language (speakers).

Later in the interview Farah said that, for her, learning the English language was very important and was her main reason for coming to New Zealand. This is because, English is an international language "…You can communicate with different people, (and) other nationalities".Some of these women also had difficulty with their English writing. As Sobia and Nida pointed out

> ...Back in my country we use British (English) but here sometimes in terms of writing, they have different jargon. So, when I first came here, I wasn't able to understand what they are saying…they have different dialect and style of writing… (Sobia)

…. I had to first of all read a lot and I figured it out that it helped (me) a lot. Yeah I had to frame my sentences in such a way that I say what I am trying to say... as well as keep to (the) word limit. (Nida)

5.4 <u>Theme 4</u>: It is my responsibility to adjust

From the interviews a fourth theme that emerged was 'it is my responsibility to adjust'. The international students claimed that they were responsible for their own adjustment and the teachers or the university had little to do with their adjustment process. They had to take the initial step in understanding the differences that were present in the academic life as well as socio-cultural life of the University.

As Maria pointed out that the adjustment process would be easier if the students take the initial step themselves.

It depends on your personality. If you are a kind of (a) person who can adjust fast so you won't have lots of problems. But if you are a person who doesn't like to change things in your personality, so it will be a big problem.

They also mentioned that once you are in a foreign country, one should not have high expectations in terms of adjusting easily to the new environment because there would be differences. As Sana said:

I didn't have high expectations before I came here (to New Zealand) because it is a different culture. I keep reminding myself (of) the cultural differences. I need to fit in some ways and make some certain knowledge about other cultures (sic).

Sobia's comments shows similarity with Sana's: "When you are in another country… you can't expect (that) it is (going to be) the same as your country. So it is the way (one should) see it and accept it …"

When these international women were asked about university or teachers' expectations and whether they were given extra help and support, they viewed the

teachers' help as a privilege instead of their right as international students. They were happy to have received treatment equal to that of the local students.

Nida gave an example of how she felt privileged when the teacher asked the international students to use their cultural background in carrying out one of the assessment. According to her

> … We had this assignment to do of 21st century parenting and we had to give our opinion. It was parenting in New Zealand. And at the end of the assessment sheet it was written that international students can use their culture instead of using New Zealand culture in the essay… I felt really accepted and didn't feel left out.

Her following comments also showed similar thinking "I feel so welcomed when a teacher say(s) 'Oh you are international student so I am expecting different view points from you in the discussion'." The following statements made by some of the respondents' showed how they felt happy about receiving the same treatment from the teachers as that of the local students. As Farah said:

> No, I think they (the teachers) are the same for all the students like kiwi or Maori or international students. I think its okay 'cause like may be the other students will feel why these students are (getting) different (treatment) than us. Like why they (the teachers) explain (to) these (international) students more than us. For that, I think we are equal. No one is better than the other even if they are the native speakers.

Maria's comment shows that she felt that the teacher did not have to spend more time explaining to the international students:

> …they will give you everything and explain to you what you have to do so that you can do it by yourself…they expect from you that you know what you are doing and you have to do things without asking (teachers all the time).. ah.. (or without asking) anybody (other students) to help you…you have to do things by yourself.

These international women saw themselves in a situation where they had to meet the expectations of the teachers and people around them because that is what they were here for and it helped them to 'achieve their goal' as well if they worked 'harder and harder'.

Summary

In sum, this chapter presented the four major themes that emerged from the transcripts of the interviews conducted with the respondents. These four themes were identified as important to the adjustments of the Muslim international women students interviewed for this thesis.

The first theme 'Adjustment is no big deal for me' and the subthemes dealt with international women students' adaptation to the academic culture of New Zealand university. The adjustment required Muslim international women students to understand and learn the new academic and socio-cultural environment but also try to maintain their own religious and cultural beliefs. The students described the process as an adaptation instead of adjustment because of the similarities found in the academic culture of New Zealand and that of their home countries. For them, the few differences were seen as positive and thus they learned about them and adapted themselves to it.

The second theme covered the idea that 'People need to learn about Islam and Muslims'. In the subthemes the students explained that once the teachers and students had understanding of the Muslim culture, their adjustment to the academic and cultural environment of the university became smoother.

The third theme 'I need to learn proper English to communicate' described the need for the international students to overcome the language barrier. According to them, the lack of English language was causing barrier in their contribution to the class discussions and in making friends with the local students. In the subthemes, the students said that it was important to improve their English language. They

achieved their goal through making friendships with the second language students and with the local Kiwi and Maori students.

It emerged in the fourth theme 'It is my responsibility to adjust' that the international students took responsibility for their own adjustment. They saw that it was up to themselves to make the process of adjustment easier. International students felt privileged when the teachers provided extra help or support to them and they were happy about getting similar treatment from the teachers as that of the local students.

Chapter 6   **Discussion**

Introduction

In the previous chapter I presented, in four themes, the selected findings that
emerged from the analysis of the interview transcripts. The purpose of this chapter
is to discuss the aspects of the findings that were particularly interesting and seem
important to explore further. I will present four main categories. The first category
will discuss the selected findings and their support for the existing literature on
international students' adjustment. The second category will discuss the
challenges the existing literature faces from my study. The third category will
discuss the 'silences' which the literature needs to investigate. Each of the
categories will be discussed in comparison to the literature presented in chapters
two and three and the findings presented in the previous chapter. The fourth
category will include recommendations for future research, theorisation and
practice. I will conclude with a summary of the chapter.

**6.1 Selected findings and their support for the existing literature on
international students' adjustment**

The literature reviewed for the purpose of my study revealed many points
regarding international students' adjustments upon their arrival to a foreign
academic and socio-cultural environment. In this section, I will discuss the ways
in which my study supports the literature's claim about the many adjustments with
which international students have to deal in a foreign university. It will also look
at to the extent this was correct for the participants involved in my study.

 The literature suggested that international students go through many adjustments
once they are in a foreign university. My study confirms that Muslim women
students need to make certain adjustments into their new academic and cultural
environment. The first adjustment that the literature suggested international
students would have to make was to the academic environment. According to the
literature, 'study shock' faced by the international students was due to the

differences found within the academic culture of the host country and that of the international student. One of the aspects of the study shock which my study confirms to which international Muslim students had to adjust was writing. This was particularly true in the case of writing essays and doing referencing. My participants revealed that although they did do essays back home it was not to the standards that are required in New Zealand academic writing. Their essays were very short compared to the ones they were required to do in New Zealand, and did not require them to use logic and reasoning to back up their points. Referencing was also identified as a new concept for the respondents which required learning.

My study also confirmed the second aspect which the literature describes: international students need to understand and adjust to different role expectations and student-teacher relationships. The participants in my study supported the literature. They noted that the relationship between the teachers and students back home were very formal compared to New Zealand. At home teachers were held in very high regard and students were not allowed to call them by their first name. In New Zealand however, the relationship is less formal and the students used the teacher's or lecturer's first name when calling them or talking to them.

English language competence was a major area of adjustment for the respondents in my study. This supports the literature's claim that English language problems cause barriers to academic success of international students and impacts on their interaction with the local students and teachers.

Limited English impacted on the Muslim international women students at many levels. They found it hard to express their ideas during group work and in writing. The respondents tended to feel distressed due to their inability to interact effectively in a group work. They felt the negative image that local students and teachers had about them due to their lack of language. This seemed to impact upon their confidence and self-esteem. They believed that the local students thought of international Muslim students as lacking knowledge. These women however said that they could not communicate well their thoughts due to their in efficient English and lack of understanding of the colloquial language. They were

also unwilling to participate because they did not want the local students to laugh at their limited language.

The literature on international student also discussed the socio-cultural adjustment that international students would face in a foreign university. According to my study, the Muslim International women students did experience to some extent 'culture shock' once they arrived in New Zealand. As the literature suggests, international students have to 'compromise their identity' in a new culture. This seemed the case of my participants who were Muslim and wore different clothing. Most of them had changed their clothing style to various degrees in order to 'look normal' in the New Zealand culture. This however did not mean they had entirely left their traditional ways of dressing, but they had modified their clothing to suit the people around them. For example, they kept the headscarves but wore it with pants and shirt or skirts instead of abaya.

My study also supports the literature regarding the friendship patterns of international students and local students. The participants revealed that there were differences in the friendship between them and the local students back home and the one present in New Zealand. The respondents pointed out that friendship patterns were not very strong in New Zealand as compared to their country and that resulted in frustration. They also had different eye contact with their teachers as the literature suggest.

My study also confirms the literature's claim that international students tend to make social groups either with their own cultural compatriots or other foreign compatriots. The participants involved in my study, usually relied on each other for help and support and also to discuss the difficulties they were facing inside and outside university life.

Having said that, one of the strategies they used to improve their English was by making friends with other foreign non-English speaking students. This helped them in improving their English both for English as a second language and a foreign language. They also pointed out that making friendships and having conversations with these students helped them overcome the difficulties they were

facing in the classroom. For example, they helped each other with understanding the text, or assignment requirements. The participants also discussed the importance of talking with the local students. This, according to them, was an essential step for getting a better command of the English language and improving their relationships with the local students.

As the participants in my study were Muslim women, the study also supported some of the theorising I made about the specific adjustment problems for these international students as Muslim women. Firstly, participants who came from educational backgrounds where they have encountered females only, found mixed classrooms new and required adjustments to it. They made efforts to enable themselves to participate as much as possible in the discussions that took place in mixed group work and learned to discuss and share academic problems with the male students.

Secondly, the study showed as I theorised in chapter three that the respondents found the cultural behaviours of New Zealand new and unexpected. These included for example, the free male-female relationships inside and outside university, the loose family ties present outside university, the less formality and easier approach of the local students and teachers. They seemed to adjust to these changes by accepting these norms.

6.2 The challenges the existing literature faces

As the previous section shows, my study confirmed and supported many points raised by the literature on international students and their adjustments. However, there are many challenges identified as a result of my study that the existing literature faces as well. These challenges will be outlined in this section.

Firstly, the literature describes the adjustment as a huge turn which international students have to make in order to accommodate their new academic and socio-cultural environment. This, as described by the literature, is due to the immense differences between the academic and socio-cultural environment of western universities and international students. However, my study showed the

adjustment for Muslim international students can be more of a gentle shift and thus the adjustment process to the academic life may not be seen as troublesome. This is because of many interesting elements which will be explored further in this section.

The most important of these elements seemed the interesting fact that these international students came from academic environments similar to that of New Zealand. The literature had assumed that the great difficulty most international students' face at a foreign university is the adjustment to the different learning and teaching styles. However, my study showed that for some participants it may not have been a great adjustment as they may come from similar educational backgrounds. For these respondents, it was a gentle shift coming from backgrounds of similar teaching and learning styles. The teachers and learners around them were not from their country and did not speak their language but the styles were familiar.

The literature also seemed to emphasise the stereotype that most international students learn by 'rote learning' and rely on memorisation and replication. In contrast, the participants in my study revealed that they did use group work and the library to find information back home. Hence, it seemed to be a relatively easy process for them to adapt themselves to these aspects of the academic environment and they did not go through a stressful and hard adjustment process as assumed by the literature.

It was also a shift instead of a huge adjustment even for those who came from a different teaching and learning background, because they had not formulated high expectations before their arrival. Instead, they seemed to know what they might have to face once they were at a foreign institute. This is because it seemed they had done previous research or had knowledge about it. Therefore, they tended to be ready and willing to come and learn the ways of teaching and learning through observation and adapt themselves to the new system.

My study also challenges the literature's claim that international students see the teachers as authority figures and thus it affects their ability to question the

teachers, receive help or convey their messages. My study showed that even though some participants came from academic situations where there was a formal, distant relationship with their teachers, upon their arrival to New Zealand and seeing the semi-formal relationship of the students and teachers, the students could happily adapt. They saw it as an element of the university environment which helped them to build a positive relationship with the teachers/lecturers. Thus, in contrast to the literature's claim, they seemed to ask for help when they wanted and they could communicate their academic problems when they were in need.

My study also challenged the literature's claim that international students' lack of the new culture's social rules and values caused problems to their adjustment. My study showed that the participants familiarised themselves with the differences in the cultural rules and values and seemed to not let it impact on their living and learning effectively. My study also pointed out that it may not be necessary for international students to become bi-cultural in order to be socially successful as the literature suggests. The participants revealed that they took step-by-step strategies to overcome the social barriers between them and the local students. That is, academically and socially for them it was important to first build a relationship with other foreign students as they could communicate their problems well with each other. Once they were confident enough in the English language, they tended then to take a step towards making friends with the local students.

The respondents also discussed the problems that existed between them and the local students which was a barrier to forming a positive relationship. This was the locals' lack of understanding of the international students' cultural beliefs and values and their attitude towards their insufficient language ability and thus their unwillingness to approach these international students. The international students described that they could feel the reluctance and it made their confidence to communicate lower.

The participants in my study also described the many positive adjustments they made in New Zealand which the existing literature had not mentioned. This is because the literature had focused on adjustment of international students as that

which mostly impacts on students negatively. These students showed a positive attitude towards some of the adjustments. They were happy to become independent individuals and not rely on others for their daily lives. That is, they were able to live by themselves, they were able to travel by themselves, and they were now more confident to communicate with people around them and share their difficulties.

 They also pointed out that they felt they were becoming better Muslims in New Zealand because as they had to explain about their religion and culture to the people around them, it made them do research and understand their religion even better. According to them, back home they just followed their elders and did not think about the logic behind their religion but here they understood better the reasons behind their actions. The students also pointed out that as learners they appreciated the differences in the education system of New Zealand and were happy that they had to learn about it and their experience also made them better in English language which is an international language.

My study also challenges the literature on Muslim women and their experiences in a foreign country. Looking at Muslim women from the Islamic background, one would imagine these women to encounter a major adjustment issue especially with the Islamic dress code and the guidelines related to Muslim women's interactions with males. However, the participants in my study seemed to enjoy doing their hijab differently. Some of these participants already came from cultural backgrounds and families which were more liberal and had a liberal approach to Islam and the Islamic dress code. They identified their dress as what they already wore back home. For those who did not come from liberal Islamic culture, they did not see their different dressing as some thing that was 'un-Islamic'. They tended to believe, to successfully adjust to the socio-cultural environment of New Zealand, it was necessary for them to change their dress to suit the locals as well as themselves. Hence, they kept wearing their headscarves but did not wear the loose abayas. They preferred wearing colourful clothes so that the black abayas did not attract people's attention.

When these women were asked about the interactions they had with the male students both Muslim and non-Muslim, an interesting element appeared. They saw these Muslim men as 'brothers' because they came from same religion and for some, from the same countries. Hence interacting with men was not a big deal because they were not 'crossing the limits' that is, having relationships with them which Islam strictly forbids. Regarding the local students, they again just talked to them in order to discuss their academic needs or problems. Thus they did not create barriers between themselves and the male students around them. I theorised that this would occur especially among women from strict Islamic countries but it appears that like some religious scholars, the respondents interpreted the Quran in a more liberal way.

There is also another area which the adjustment literature has not discussed. The literature does not talk about how international students' culture and religion can impact on their adjustment to the new environment and how they take upon themselves the responsibility to explain the cultural and religious differences. This was clearly visible in my study. These Muslim women had taken upon themselves the responsibility to make their adjustment process work. That was done through taking up the responsibility to teach the local students and teachers about their cultural and religious practices and by explaining to them their dress code.

This now leads to the 'silences', that is, the issues which the participants in my study did not talk about and the literature needs to further look into for better understanding. These silences are discussed in detail in the following section.

6.3 'Silences' which the literature needs to investigate

There are many issues that the participants in my study did not identify as part of the adjustment process. These issues are the 'silences' of my study which the literature needs to investigate as they challenge the existing research in the area of international students.

The first of these silences is the fact that these women did not mention throughout the interview the problems they encountered when they first arrived into New

Zealand. As I knew most of these women when they first arrived in New Zealand, and had talked to them about the problems they were facing as a researcher, I was hoping that those problems would be outlined by them in this study. To my surprise, these women did not raise the problems and concerns they had discussed earlier. This could be due to the fact that their conversation was going to be published and would be used in academic spheres and thus perhaps they made careful comments to me. Also there is possibility that, during the course of adjustment they had forgotten the problems they faced at the beginning in New Zealand. Perhaps this was due to the fact that most of them went to Language Institutes before entering universities. Hence, when they were asked to discuss the problems they faced in academic spheres, they already had adjusted and were prepared to step into the university life and thus did not encounter many adjustment problems. Perhaps, it could also be due to the reason that the immediate adjustments pre-occupied them and erased memory of the earlier ones.

The second silence throughout the interview is that, the international students did not mention the responsibility of the university, or organisations which could make their adjustment process easier by helping them to identify strategies to cope with any difficulty they might encounter. In the study, these women did not point out that it could be the responsibility of the organisations or the university to help them upon their arrival to university. They also did not mention that the university could identify difficulties that the international students might encounter and the ways to deal with them for example, who to approach and how. Indeed, they did not seem aware of services which existed on campus to help them.

It is note worthy that Muslim woman from various cultural backgrounds do their hijab differently as was evident with the Muslim women participants of my study. Hence it is important that there should be research done on how these cultural values and dress codes impact on the extent to which Muslim women adjust their hijab. There is variation in the degrees in which international Muslim women dress in foreign universities and that may be based on their cultural background and the dress code. The challenge the literature faces is its lack of research in the

area of Muslim women and their adjustment problems based on their cultural background.

As a researcher I was expecting that these Muslim women would admire and discuss the right they are given by their religion to be able to get education. I was expecting that since Islam regards those in pursuit of education in high esteem, these women would proudly talk about the opportunities they have as Muslims who are getting education in a foreign country. Also, I was expecting them to discuss how they could contribute to their societies through this new knowledge and experiences and implement all this knowledge in their lives. However, they did not discuss these issues. They also did not mention that as Muslims they were given the right to even pursue higher education such as Masters or Doctorate and thus they could have a passion for that and want to achieve those goals as well.

6.4 Recommendations for future research, theorisation and practice

This section will now briefly explore the recommendations for the future research, theorisation and practice. After conducting my study, a vacuum is found in the research regarding international students and their adjustment issues, which needs to be filled by future research. This would then improve the research and theory regarding international students and will enable the future policy makers to effectively deal with the adjustment issues of the international students. This section hence can be divided into three sub-categories: research, theorisation and practice.

6.4.1 Research

The first category in the recommendations is the need for 'research'. Many issues seem to need further exploration. For example, the literature does not discuss the emotional or psychological impact on the international students' due to teachers and local students' lack of knowledge of their religious and cultural beliefs. The literature does not mention the need for academic institutes to provide their staff members with adequate background information related to the different cultures and religions that the various international students come from due to

globalisation. This could be achieved by providing the staff members with informative books or having special classes that deals with showing or teaching the staff members about some basic yet important information related to the international students cultural backgrounds. These are researchable issues. Researchers thus could find out how the lack of knowledge of teachers and students impacts on the international students and to what extent it may effect their academic and socio-cultural adjustments. It was clear from my study that some of these women seemed amazed by the lack of sensitivity of the teachers towards them and their culture which led to them dropping out of those classes and avoiding papers that were taken by those lecturers. This could be an area of further research.

From my study, it also emerged that international students seemed to create their own strategies to cope with their socio-cultural adjustment on their own and did not ask for help from the university or other organisations. The researchers thus could investigate why these international students did not know about the help and support they could receive within the university or through other organisations. Research could determine the impact of this on these students' adjustment.

Even though these women mentioned the need for teachers to learn about their culture, again they deemed that it was 'okay' for them to teach these people so they could learn about their Muslim culture and beliefs. There is need for further research to explore what adjustment problems these students might go through when there is lack of knowledge among the staff and students. Also, what impact it has on them psychologically and on their academic success when they have to often explain about themselves or their religion. As some women mentioned they have to explain something repeatedly and that made them frustrated at times.

Future research is also needed to be done regarding Muslim women who come from Muslim countries and enter non-Muslim countries. Researchers could find out the impact of the cultural and social environment on these women personally. This is important because, as some Muslim women identified in my research, they seemed happy about some of the changes they made during their process of adjustment such as being independent, changes to their clothing, the ability to

communicate with male and female and so on. There is a need for longitudinal study to investigate how this change in the thinking of women impacts on them when they go back to their home countries. The researcher needs to investigate whether this causes a change in the ways they practice their daily dealings and whether it causes tension among these Muslim women, their families and their surrounding a home environment.

Another area where there is further need for research is to explore the tension, if there is any, between how Muslim women perceive their religious privilege of being able to receive education and at the same time the responsibility put on them, to be good mothers, sisters and house wives. Researchers could also investigate how well developed the idea that Muslim women should achieve not just basic education, but Islam recommends achievement of higher education as well, is among Muslim women pursuing education in foreign universities. They can also find out whether Muslim women are even aware of this right. This would also give insights into how it impacts on them personally and to what extent they make efforts to achieve these goals.

Even though in my study, these women seemed to have happily made changes to the way they dress and some mentioned that they had not made any changes and used a similar dress code back home, this area needs further investigation. First, did those women, who changed their dress code to adjust to New Zealand's environment, do it willingly and did their parents back home approve of their reasons for doing so? It was unclear from this study but it could be possible that the Muslim dress code for these women causes anxieties which we do not know about. There is literature that discusses hijab and how it could be oppressive, but there is a lack of literature that discusses how Muslim women coming from different cultural backgrounds, have to adjust their dress and its implication for the success for them as students.

The researchers could also investigate the ways in which the Muslim women adjust their hijab based on their cultural background. As evident from my study, the degree in which different women adjusted their hijab differentiated based on their cultural background. So the researcher can explore further to what extent the

cultural clothing and background impacts on the adjustment of hijab and also its implication for the success for them as students.

The researchers also needs to discover the adjustments that 'Western' students would need to make with the foreign students when they are working with them in the classrooms or dealing with them in social environment. This would give insight to the similarities and the differences between both group's adjustments.

6.4.2 Theorisation

This study was enriched by the application of the theoretical positions of Muslim women and education. There is need for further theorisation based on other religions and the complications that students belonging to those various religions might face. There is also need for further theorisation based on the adjustment problems of students from different cultural beliefs and the congruencies and in congruencies of students among themselves and in relationship with others.

It would also be important to theorise Muslim women education issues from the Muslim feminist point of views. This would enable the researchers to discuss how these feminist views work or does not work with some of the literature that is around the Muslim women education. There is further need for theorisation based on feminist critique of Muslim women education as this thesis only barely touches on some of these ideas. Thus this thesis just hinted some of the feminist Muslim ideas regarding the male elite and patriarchal issues that surround the Muslim education.

6.4.3 Practice

There are many implications that seemed to emerge and needs further exploration, for the practitioners as well such as the teachers, universities, government, policy developers and so on.

For example, my study pointed out that the international students' seemed to have taken responsibility for their own adjustment into the new academic environment

such as meeting the expectations of the teachers. As my study showed, these women felt a responsibility to change themselves according to their new environment. They did not see the role for changed government or university policies and practices which could help them understand the new culture better. It was evident that students who were familiar with the cultural expectations in New Zealand were those who had previously been to Language Institutes but those who had came straight to their respective degrees or were in preparatory courses, lacked these opportunities. Policies and practices in government and universities can be reconsidered to help improve these students' cultural awareness of New Zealand.

It was also interesting that these women did not see the help and support they were getting from their teachers and staff members as their right. Rather they saw it a privilege for example when they could attend different classes in times of Ramadan, or when they were given help by the teachers by explaining the assessment requirements. It seemed that the international students did not see the responsibility of the teachers to have different expectations from these international students and were content that they were getting same treatment as that of the local students. Thus, institutes need to clearly layout to the staff how they could make international students' transactions into the university smoother.

That is, they could provide help and support for the students so that they are familiar with their rights as international students. Universities could do this at the earliest stage of an international student's arrival so that they would get a clear picture of how the government or university can help them.

Summary

In summary, this chapter discussed the various aspects of the findings that seemed important and need further exploration. The first section which described the ways in which the selected findings supported the existing literature on international students' adjustment showed that international students' had to make many adjustments to the academic and social life especially of foreign university. This was particularly evident in their adjustment to writing styles that are present in the

western universities. Students also had to make adjustment to the students-teacher relationship, which they found to be less formal.

The second category in this chapter discussed the challenges the existing literature on international students' faces. The first challenge was that the literature saw adjustment as a huge turn whereas it was more of a gentle shift. The participants in my study also described many positive adjustments they made in New Zealand which the existing literature had not mentioned for example, being independent and confident individuals.

The third category in this chapter discussed the silences that seemed apparent in the study. For example, these women did not mention throughout the interview the problems they encountered when they first arrived into New Zealand. They also did not mention the responsibility of the university, or organisations which could have made the adjustment process of these students easier by providing them with strategies to cope with any difficulty they might encounter.

The fourth category included future recommendations for future research, theorisation and practice. There seemed to be many issues which need to be researched further. For example, research needs to be done to discuss the huge emotional or psychological impact on the international students' due to teachers' and local students' lack of knowledge of their religious and cultural beliefs.

The literature also needs to investigate the impact of international students taking up responsibility for their own adjustment into the new academic environment. In theorisation, there is need for investigation to find the impact of other religions and cultures on the adjustments of students belonging to those various religions and cultures. Also, there is need for theorisation based on Muslim feminist critique of the issues that surround Muslim women education. Finally, practitioners, such as the policy makers, staff members, university and the government, need to investigate their role in how they could make international students transactions into the university smoother, that is, to what extent should they provide help and support.

Chapter 7   **Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the summary of all chapters that this study undertook. It will thus first present the summary of chapters one to six and then present a conclusion for my study.

The purpose of chapter one 'Introduction' was to outline my interest and reasons for undertaking this research study. As mentioned the reason for undertaking this study was due to my observation of the increase in the number of Muslim women students at the University of Waikato, while I was still doing my last year of a Bachelor's degree in 2005. What interested me the most was the fact that the culture and the religion of these women contrasted with the culture and the religion dominant in New Zealand. Hence, I wanted to find out what kinds of adjustment these women had to make once they arrived in a society that seemed so different from their own. Another aspect that made me interested in this topic was the fact that the education system in many Muslim countries is different to that of New Zealand especially the university system. Therefore the general research question that guided my initial research was: "What are the views of international Muslim women students about the adjustments they must make to fit into a New Zealand University?"

This study has significance on many levels. Firstly, the vision of globalisation is to provide bring together many cultures and religions together from around the world through the means of education. It is associated with the aim of internationalisation which wants to achieve a greater understanding of cultural distinctiveness. Hencein recent years there has been a growth in the enrolment of students from other countries into Western institutions like in the United States of America, Britain, Australia, Canada and especially the tertiary institutions in New Zealand. The number of international students in New Zealand is recorded to be approximately 11000 in 2003.

Hence this study can be helpful for the tertiary providers, policy developers and researchers. Firstly, study provided information about the adjustments that

Muslim women students need to make in order to fit into a tertiary institution. Secondly, I feel that this research provided evidence to tertiary providers and policy developers about Muslim women's adjustment processes and how they might help with the adjustment processes Muslim women think they must go through in order to adjust to the foreign academic environment.

Finally, I believe that this study will be important source of empowerment for Muslim women who are international students and those women who are willing to undertake study about international Muslim women. This is because, unfortunately there is not as much student's accessible information regarding Muslim international female students as one can find about other international students. At the end of the chapter I provided a brief description of the content of the chapters within the study.

With the internationalisation of education and decrease in the number of local students, university classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse. Therefore, in chapter two 'Literature Review', I reviewed the literature on the adjustment issues of non-English speaking international students upon their entrance to a Western university. The literature first described the source of literature that is; how and from where the information was gathered and gave detail of the terms that were used to retrieve the information.

The chapter then outlined the two dominant themes that emerged from the literature regarding the adjustment of international students. The two themes were international students' adjustment to the academic culture and international students' adjustment to the socio-cultural environment.

In the academic culture, international students are faced with study shock which has three elements. The first element to which international students have to adjust is the different learning and teaching styles. This includes the different ways of learning and participation in the classrooms and the different ways of writing in Western universities. The second element of study shock is the different roles and expectations for student and teacher relationships. The third element is

the different English language competence. They have to adjust their English language competence in order to communicate their thoughts well.

In the socio-cultural environment found within the universities, the international student needs to adjust to new values, attitudes and behaviour patterns. They might have to squeeze or compromise their identity into the constraints of pre-established sets of rules and conventions. International students coming to high touch cultures have to adjust to the amount of body contact that is allowed. They are required to adjust to the ways of communication and interaction found among the local students. International students are also required to become Bi-cultural by making links with the host nationals if they want to facilitate their academic and professional aims.

This chapter also outlined the five major flaws found in the research which resulted in the weakness of the literature that was reviewed.

Chapter three 'Islam and Women's Education ', firstly described the position of Islam in relation to education in general. It was evident that Islam encourages its followers to pursue education regardless of their gender and holds those in pursuit of education in very high esteems. Islam wants every believer to have wisdom and broad intellectual knowledge as well as a good education in religion. There are many Hadiths and verses of Quran that asks Muslims to attain education.

Secondly, this chapter explored women's education in Islam in particular. Islamic law was first to grant women full rights and was ahead of other legal systems including, that of the west. Looking at the history of Muslim women, one can find great scholars who achieved enormously from their right to education. The Quran and the Hadiths has repeatedly asked women to become educated as they are the builders of the society. The current encouragement of female education by Islamic countries however could be influenced by various elements. For example, Islam's current encouragement of women's education could also be shaped by economic and political variables. The first of such variables are the "Millennium Development Goals" which require all its signatories' countries to develop female education in their countries if they are to receive economical and political help from already developed countries.

However due to different interpretations of the Islamic scholars of the verses of the Quran, Muslim people cultural and tribal codes, in many Muslim countries women are deprived of their right to education. This thus makes Western nations and the media to question the religion instead of the Muslims.

Thirdly, this chapter presented Islam and guidelines for women pursuing education. Even though Islam encourages women to pursue education, it also sets some guidelines. For example, Islam requires women to guard their chastity hence they are asked to wear proper dress code when going in pursuit of education. They are also encouraged to not intermingle freely with the males when they are in social situation.

The chapter then outlined different Islamic countries approach to women education. it was seen that countries who had followed strict interpretations of the Quran, ironically it had improved the female literacy rate for example countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. Whereas there are countries who take liberal approach to the interpretations of the Quran and thus provide co-education as well.

The chapter then presented the theorisation based on Muslim women and the knowledge gained form the information regarding Islam and the different interpretations regarding women education. There are many adjustments that Muslim women have to make such as adjustment to the academic culture. They would have to adjust to teacher/student relationship and also adjust their interaction with males. They might also have to adjust their hijab and eye contact with male teachers or classmates. This chapter also described the refined research question based on the information retrieved from chapter two 'literature review' and the information gained from this chapter.

Chapter four 'Research Design' outlined the qualitative method used for the purpose of this study. It describes the advantages of the qualitative method which is an interactive way of collecting the data. It looks into the social reality through the participants' perspective and provides the participants' with voice. The data

gathered through qualitative method is thick and it deals with language rather than numbers.

Second, the chapter described the data collection method used in this study which was a semi-structured interview. The interview questions used in the interview resulted from the literature reviewed and from theorizing of the literature. This section also describes the respondents involved in the study. Third, the chapter outlines the data analysis method which in this study's case was transcribing verbatim the audio taped interviews. Once the interviews were transcribed, major themes that seemed to emerge were identified. This section also describes the ethical issues involved while conducting the study. The power relation between the interviewer and the respondents was kept in mind and confidentiality and privacy was dealt with by using pseudo names for the respondents during the data analysis and throughout the study.

Finally, the chapter presented the limitations to this study which was related to the time constrain in which the study took place.

In chapter five 'Selected Findings', I presented the four major themes that emerged from the transcripts of the interviews conducted with the respondents. These four themes were identified as important to the adjustments of the Muslim international women students interviewed for this thesis.

The first theme 'Adjustment is no big deal for me' and the subthemes dealt with international women students' adaptation to the academic culture of New Zealand University. For them, the adjustment required them to understand and learn about the new culture but keep their own religious and cultural beliefs. The students described the process as an adaptation instead of adjustment because of the similarities found in the academic culture of New Zealand and that of their home countries. For them, the few differences were seen as positive and thus they learned about them and adapted themselves to it.

The second theme covered the idea that 'People need to learn about Islam and Muslims'. In the subthemes the students explained that once the teachers and students had understanding of the Muslim culture, their adjustment to the academic and cultural environment of the university became smoother.

The third theme 'I need to learn proper English to communicate' described the need for the international students to overcome the language barrier. According to them, the lack of English language was causing barrier in their contribution to the class discussions and in making friends with the local students. In the subthemes, the students said that it was important to improve their English language. They achieved their goal through making friendships with the second language students and with the local Kiwi and Maori students.

It emerged in the fourth theme 'It's my responsibility to adjust' that the international students took self responsibility for their own adjustment. They saw that it was up to the individuals' to make the process of adjustment easier for themselves. Internationals students felt privileged when the teachers provided extra help or support to them and they were happy about getting similar treatment from the teachers as that of the local students.

Chapter six 'Discussion' discussed the various aspects of the findings that seemed important and needed further exploration. The first section which described the ways in which the selected findings supported the existing literature on international students' adjustment showed that international students' had to make many adjustments to the academic and social life especially of foreign university. This was particularly evident in their adjustment to writing styles that are present in the Western universities. Students also had to make adjustment to the students-teacher relationship, which they found to be less formal. It was also confirmed that international students face great adjustment problem due to their lack of the English language competence. It impacts their ability during the discussions and when interacting with the students and teachers.

In this section, it was also evident that international students' have to compromise their identity to some extents in order to adjust to their surrounding environment such as adapting their way of clothing. It was also evident that these students felt that the friendship patterns were not very strong in New Zealand as compared to their home countries. The study confirmed that international students tend to make social groups with either student's from same cultural and religious backgrounds

as them or with other international students. This helps them in their adjustment to the social ad academic life of the university as well as helped them in improving their English language. In this section it was also evident that many international Muslim students found problems in mix discussion groups as they had not encounter male fellow students before. They also found the cultural behaviours of New Zealand new and unexpected such as the loose family ties, male-female relationship inside and outside classrooms.

The second category in this chapter discussed the challenges the existing literature on international students' faces. The first challenge was that the literature saw adjustment as a huge turn whereas it was more of a gentle shift. It was due to the similarities between the academic environment and between the learning and teaching styles of New Zealand and that of their home countries. The literature also has a stereotype regarding the international students especially those coming from non-Western academic background. It views them as rote learners. Whereas the international students in my study showed they were used to working in groups and using libraries to do their individual research work.

The adjustment was also a gentle shift because they had not formulated high expectations before their arrival to New Zealand. They were ready and willing to come and learn the ways of teaching and learning through observation and adapt themselves to the new system. They also happily adapted themselves to the less formal relationship of the teachers and students which the literature perceived as a great difficulty to international students' adjustment. My study showed that the participants familiarised themselves with the differences in the cultural rules and values and viewed it important for their academic and social success.

The participants in my study also described the many positive adjustments they made in New Zealand which the existing literature had not mentioned which included elements such as them becoming independent and confident individuals. They also had better as the questioning of students' and teachers' made them do research about their religious beliefs. Their experiences in New Zealand had improved their English language competence which otherwise would have not been successful to this extent back home and they also found the new education

system helpful. They also showed appreciation as they could do their hijab differently in New Zealand. Also, they did not view their interaction a big deal as they could discuss their academic needs or problems. The literature also lacks to discuss how international students' culture and religion impact on their adjustment to the new environment and how they can take upon themselves the responsibility to explain the cultural and religious differences.

The third category in this chapter discussed the silences that seemed apparent in the study. The first of these silences was the fact that these women did not mention throughout the interview the problems they encountered when they first arrived into New Zealand. They did not raise the problems and concerns they had discussed in their earlier years. The second silence is that, throughout the interview, the international students did not mention the responsibility of the university, or organisations which could make the adjustment process of these students easier by providing them with strategies to cope with any difficulty they might encounter.

Also, they did not mention whether their parents back home approved their reasons for changing their hijab and it was unclear from this study but it could be possible that the Muslim dress code for these women causes anxieties which we do not know about. It was also unclear that whether these Muslim women would admire their religious right to education and higher. Hence the literature could look into these areas as well and could find out how well developed these ideas are among Muslim women pursuing education in foreign universities and whether they are even aware of these rights.

The fourth category included future recommendations for future research, theorisation and practice. The research needs to be done to discuss the huge emotional or psychological impact on the international students' due to teachers' and local students' lack of knowledge of their religious and cultural beliefs. The literature also needs to investigate the impact of international students taking up responsibility for their own adjustment into the new academic environment and meeting the expectations of the teachers because they did not see the role for changed government or university policies and practices which could help them understand the new culture better.

The researchers also need to investigate how this change in the personality and thinking of women impacts on them when they go back to their home countries. The researcher needs to investigate whether this causes change in the ways they practice their daily dealings and whether it cause tension among these Muslim women, their families and their surrounding environment. Apart from that, future research needs to explore whether Muslim women perceive their religious privilege of being able to receive education where ever it may be and at the same the responsibility put on them, to be good mothers, sisters and house wives as a joy or burden. There is also need for future research to investigate the ways in which the Muslim women adjust their hijab based on their cultural background.

In theorisation, there is need to theorise the adjustments of students who belong to other religious and cultural groups and how it might impact their adjustment process. There is also need for theorisation based on Muslim feminist critique of Muslim women education.

For the practitioners, there is need to investigate the role of the staff and institutes to clearly identify the role of staff in how they could make international students transaction to the university smoother. That is, to what extent should they provide help and support and it should be made available for the students as well so that they are familiar with their rights as international students.

Throughout this preliminary study, I have suggested that there is need for the universities and the policy developers to understand the increasing number of international students' especially Muslim women students' entering New Zealand universities. This is because I hope that by understanding the cultural and religious background of these students universities could help in the adjustment of the international Muslim women students inside the academic and social environment of universities. It is our responsibility as education providers to create a compatible approach between research, theory and practice for a successful future of international education.

This Master's research was a lengthy process but it has taught me many things in life in general as well as particular to Muslim women and education. This one

year has been a hard work due to my sickness and pregnancy which made me discouraged at times to carry on with my work. But due to the encouragement and support from my family and my supervisor, I managed to pull through it. It was a great experience as it taught me many things in life, including how to be strong in what you believe in yet listen and understand to other peoples' point of views. This research also made me realise the great responsibility a researcher has especially when dealing with human subject and presenting their thoughts and perspectives genuinely.

APPENDIX A

I am a University of Waikato Masters student working on a research project which focuses on Muslim international women students views about the adjustments they must make to fit into a New Zealand University.

 I hope that you will agree to participate in my research project. I envisage having a 1 hour long, taped conversation with you about your thoughts and views.

I will bring to our conversation more detailed written information and consent forms for this research project.

PLEASE NOTE:

- I will do my best to preserve your anonymity.
- You are able to withdraw from the project at any time until the 30th November, 2007, before the final draft has been completed.
- The information you provide will be securely stored and used only for the purposes of this research project.
- In keeping with the requirements of the University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Regulations the data must be archived indefinitely.
- General research results may form the basis of public and/or conference publications and presentation.
- In any publications and presentations your anonymity will be preserved.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me (see below) or my supervisor for this graduate research project Dr. Joyce Stalker (838 4466 extn 8257).

If you are interested in taking part please complete the following form and return to me during our meeting in the prayer room. I will then arrange a convenient interview time for us to talk. Many thanks for your support.

Zainab Bahiss   (07) 8525859
14 Gillett lane   (021) 2096991
HAMILTON

EMAIL: zb4@waikato.ac.nz

NAME:---

ADDRESS:---

PHONE NO:---

EMAIL:--

APPENDIX B

Dear …………………………………

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a project which is the final part of my Masters in Education. The question which guides my thesis is: **What are the views of Muslim international women students about their adjustments to a New Zealand university?**

I have approached you as someone who has information and insights which will be useful to my study. I appreciate you taking the time to share your knowledge, views and thoughts with me.

PLEASE NOTE:

- I will do my best to preserve your anonymity.
- You are able to withdraw from the project at any time until the 30th November, 2007, before the final draft has been completed.
- The information you provide will be securely stored and used only for the purposes of this research project.
- In keeping with the requirements of the University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Regulations the data must be archived indefinitely.
- General research results may form the basis of public and/or conference publications and presentation.
- In any publications and presentations your anonymity will be preserved.

In order to follow the University of Waikato Ethics procedures, I would appreciate your co-operation in signing the attached form. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me (see below) or my supervisor for this graduate research project Dr. Joyce Stalker (838 4466 extn 8257).

Yours Sincerely,

Zainab Bahiss   (07) 8525859
14 Gillett lane   (021) 2096991
HAMILTON

EMAIL: zb4@waikato.ac.nz

RESPONDENTS TO KEEP THE ABOVE SECTION

INTERVIWER TO KEEP THE SECTION BELOW

I understand the nature of this research project in which I am involved and understand that:

- Every effort will be made to preserve my anonymity.
- I am able to withdraw from the project at any time up until the 30th November, 2007, before the final draft has been completed.
- The information I provide will be securely stored and used only for the purposes of this research project.
- In keeping with the requirements of the University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Regulations the data must be archived indefinitely.
- General research results may form the basis of public and/or conference publications and presentation.
- In any publications and presentations your anonymity will be preserved.

I agree to participate in this research project.

Signed……………………………………..   Date……………………..

APPENDIX C

What are the views of Muslim international women students about their adjustments to a New Zealand university?

Guided interview schedule

These are the questions that will makeup the semi-structured interviews with the five women for my research project.

Warm UP Questions

Tell me a little bit about yourself.

Where do you come from? How old are you?

How long have you been in New Zealand for?

How long have you been at Waikato University?

What degree are you doing? What other qualifications do you have?

Why did you decide to come to New Zealand for education?

What made you choose Waikato University for your studies?

General Questions

- Please tell me what do you think 'adjustment' means?
- Since you have come to this university, what were the biggest adjustments you had to make?

Probe around Questions

Academic culture (beliefs**,** learning and teaching style, participation, writing, student/teacher relationship, language**)**

- What do you think are the beliefs and ideas of Waikato University, to which you had to adjust to?
- Are there any expectations of the university which you were surprised by?

- Can you tell me about the learning and teaching styles here? How were they different to what you were used to? What adjustments did you have to make to fit to the learning and teaching styles?

- Was the way teacher expect their students to write about any topic similar to your country? How did you mange to understand and adjust your self to the way writing is used here?

- Are there any special expectations you think the teachers might have for international students? Or any assumptions they might have in their mind about international students? What adjustments you had to make to meet those expectations?

- How did you feel about the way students are required to contribute to the class discussions? What adjustments you had to make there?

- How do you feel about the teacher and student relationship that is present at the university? Is it different to how you were with you teachers? What adjustments you had to make to build that relationship?

Socio-culture (culture, social rules and values, behaviour, communication, interaction)

- What do you think is different about New Zealand, and how do you think it has shaped your experiences and adjustment process?

- Did you find the social rules of people in New Zealand different to that of your country? What adjustments did you have to make for that?

- Did your Muslim identity clash with the social rules and behaviours of people around you? What adjustments did you make to keep or change your identity?

- What do you feel about the behaviour of people around you? Was it any different to what you were expecting?

- How did you feel about the co-education system of Waikato University?

- How did you manage to adjust yourself to the mix classroom environment?

- What do you feel about the local students' reaction to you as Muslim international students?

Other questions

- Being in New Zealand, do you think the adjustment was an easier process for you compared to if you were in any other foreign country? How?
- Does being a Muslim woman have any influence on your adjustment process?
- Describe some of the positive adjustments you made while in New Zealand.

Theorising

- Tell me how you felt about the male and female relationship which is present in the classrooms. What adjustments did you make to fit into such classroom environment?
- How was it for you to approach you male teachers? How was the difference in the interaction between you and your female teachers compared to you with your male teachers?
- What was your reaction when you realised that eye contact is very important during conversations? What adjustments did you have to make especially in case of male students and teachers?
- Do you feel your interaction with Muslim male students on the campus is different to your interaction with non-Muslim male students? How and why?
- How do you feel about friendship with male students?
- Did you feel any reaction (positive or negative) from students or teachers regarding your hijab? What adjustments you had to make regarding your hijab and fitting in?

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