

Aaishah's choice: Muslims choosing home education for the management of risk

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Abstract *In Australia, the decision to home educate is becoming increasingly popular (Townsend, 2012, January 30). In spite of its increasing popularity, the reasons home education is chosen by Australian families are under-researched (Jackson & Allan, 2010). In addition, the decision to home educate among minority groups, such as Australian Muslim families, is almost absent from the literature with the exception of one study in Victoria (Habibullah, 2004). This paper reports on an interview with one Muslim mother who chose to home educate her children. An in-depth, qualitative interview was conducted with Aaishah (pseudonym), a mother who lived in one of Australia's most populated cities. Data were analysed using the Discourse Historical Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis. The analysis revealed that there were similarities with the discourses of Christian parents described in home education literature, in terms of the reasons Aaishah had given for her decision to home educate. In particular, analysis reveals Aaishah's fears about schools, in relation to academic and social development, their negative impact on her children and her hopes for her children's futures.*

Keywords School choice, home education, Muslim home education, religious education

Introduction

Muslim homeschoolers are almost completely absent from the research into home education. While much recent literature has focused on the choice of home education (Anthony & Burroughs, 2010; 2012; Cooper, 2012; Jackson & Allan, 2010), and the link between home education and “women's work” (Lois, 2010), there are very limited research studies of Muslim mothers' home education choice. This paper reports on a pilot study into the choice and experience of home education among a group of Muslim mothers in the outer suburbs of a large city in Australia. The paper takes the perspective that a mother's experiences can best be understood as the intersection of issues of social class, culture and religion that are woven together in the decision to home educate. One mother is the focus of this

paper because, as Lareau (2000) notes, preparation for and involvement in education and schooling is primarily mothers' work. Women, far more than men, are the responsible party for the children's 'cognitive development' and they do this through preparation for, and involvement in, schooling (Lareau, 2000). It should be noted that only one mother's voice is used here. My analysis needs to be located in my identity as a white, middle class, professional woman, raised as a Catholic.

The mother is Aiashah (a pseudonym of the participant's choosing). She is a middle class, religious, Muslim mother. The use of her story is not meant to suggest that she is representative of the experiences of all middle class, religious, Muslim mothers in Australia. Nor does it mean that all Australian Muslim, home educating mothers will have similar experiences. The theoretical lens of intersectionality has been used to imply that the experiences analysed in this mother's story are unique to her and may contribute to further understanding of middle-class Muslim mothers' experiences of home education in first world countries.

Literature

There is very little published work on the experience of Muslim women who home educate. The known literature is limited to one Masters thesis conducted in 2011 in the US (Saghir, 2011) and another in Melbourne in 2004 (Habibullah, 2004). The theses argue that Muslim families home educate because of their faith and their desire to educate their children wholly in that faith (Saghir, 2011; Habibullah, 2004). Their findings reflect studies on Evangelical Christian home educators (Moore & Moore, 1981; Van Galen, 1988; 1991; Apple, 2000; 2007; Collom, 2005) which suggested faith, values and management of outside influences coalesce in the decision to home educate among Evangelical families. These studies rely on the work of Van Galen (1988; 1991), and in particular his characterisation of Christian home education families in the US as ideologues. Ideologues are seen as strongly religious, tending to home educate because they want control their children's education. They are generally concerned with a perceived lack of academic rigor in schools, a lack of what are considered to be Christian values among school staff, as well as a lack of attention given to the individual student by their teachers. Their concerns then are two-fold, both academic and moral or spiritual.

In his study of Evangelical Christian home educators, Van Galen (1991) argued that, as a group, they choose to home educate *principally* for ideological reasons. Christian home educators' ideological reasons include, as Moore and Moore (1981, in Collom, 2005) have argued, to "crusade against the secular forces of modern society" (p. 309) by imparting their particular religious beliefs and values onto their children. Gaither (2009) focused on the way that Christian Evangelicals dominate perceptions of home education, particularly in the US. He found that Evangelical Christian families chose to home educate to prevent their children being exposed to the liberal, secular environment and a lack of Bible

studies classes in mainstream US schools. Similarly, Saghir (2011) suggests that, for Muslim families, a lack of instruction on the Qur'an is also significant in their decision to home educate. Thus, studies of the movement of religious home educators suggest that the reasons committed religious parents choose this path are because of concerns with the values taught in mainstream schools. Saghir's (2011) findings in the US are supported by Habibullah's (2004) work in Australia among religious Muslim families.

As there is limited research examining the specific experiences of Muslim home educators, in the US, the UK or in Australia, with the exception of the work of Saghir (2011) and Habibullah (2004), this paper locates itself within wider research on home education, as well as in studies of minority groups and school choice and broader studies of Muslim women's experiences in liberal democracies. Thus, this paper locates all education choices as equally valid. In previous work (English, 2013), I argue that home education choice operates on a spectrum of choices available to Australian families. My work draws heavily on Morton's (2012) work. In the UK, Morton (2012) looked at families who chose to home educate, regardless of whether their decision had been religiously motivated or not. She argues, for middle-class home educating parents, their stated reasons for choosing to home educate mirrored the "rationales for educational choice used by middle class parents about their choice of private school" (Morton, 2012, p. 47). These rationales included "social milieu, acquisition of wider life skills and the transmission of values" (Morton, 2012, p. 47).

Similarly, Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2010) argued that the decision to home educate was similar to the motivations among middle class parents who involved themselves actively in schools. For Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2010), the motivation was one of monitoring and policing the school in line with concerns over their children's education. Similarly, as I argue in a previous paper (English, 2013), the choice to home educate has more in common with the choice of a private school in Australia as it operates along a similar "choice" line. As Lees (2014) notes about school exit, it "involves elements of choice by parents and children to remove themselves from the pedagogic, social and material technology of mainstream schooling" (p. 122). Further, choosing home education can be theorised, in line with Hirschman (1970), "from the perspective of choice, facilitated by the knowledge that schooling is not compulsory" (Lees, 2014, p. 122). Lees argues, if parents are unable to voice their concerns about schooling, then exit becomes their only option. It may be that parents like Aaishah choose to exit because they cannot exercise an agentive speaking of their voice about schooling, either within a school or from outside it.

Studies that examine the school choice process among middle-class minority families have found that they choose specific schools, and intervene in their child's schooling, to voice their concerns about public schools and, concomitantly, manage

the risks their children face. Examining the experiences of 62 black families in the UK, the Vincent, Rollock, Ball & Gillborn (2012a; 2012b; 2012c) studies argued that school presented several risks to minority students. For example, they found that parents perceived a risk that their “children may not fully realise their academic potential” (Vincent et al., 2012b, p. 266). Interestingly, academic potential is significant to Van Galen’s understanding of the Christian home educating ideologue.

Vincent et al (2012a; 2012b; 2012c) used the concept of intersectionality to examine school choices among black UK families. They argue that intersectionality can be used to fill a gap in existing sociological research because it allows the various dimensions of the decision to choose one school over another to be considered. They use the work of Crenshaw (1993) to argue that “identities are not reducible to just one dimension,” thus “a theoretical focus on, say, class can simplify and reduce, and through reduction, miss and misrepresent the experiences of ... the interrelated roles of class, race and gender in their lives” (Vincent et al., 2012c, p. 140). Using intersectionality, they argue that researchers can focus on “the ways in which, for different Black middle-class parents at different points in time and in different interactions, race, class and/or gender can come to the fore” and each factor contributes to the choice of one school over another (Vincent et al., 2012a).

Several recent studies of the experiences of Muslim women in western, liberal-democratic countries have used intersectionality in their approaches (Essers, Benschop & Doorewaard, 2010; Bilge, 2010; Mirza, 2013). For example, Mirza (2013) argued that the dynamics of race, gender and religion coalesce on Muslim women’s bodies to affect their experiences in contemporary Britain. She found that, using intersectional theories, the discourse constructed about the professional, Muslim, middle class woman positioned these women as a “recognizable other” and, as a result, “regulatory discourses of gendered and raced inequity and subjugation are ‘performed’ or exercised in the everyday material world of the socially constructed ‘Muslim woman’ in the ‘West’” (Mirza, 2013, p. 13).

In a similar study in the Netherlands, Essers, et al. (2010) argued that successful Muslim businesswomen experienced tensions and exclusions associated with the intersections of gender, race and religion. They found that dominant western discourses position successful Muslim women as “the ‘Other other’: the entrepreneur who is not-male and who is not-white” (Essers et al., 2010, p. 337). For Bilge (2010) the concept of intersectionality, applied to Muslim women’s experiences, was tied up with agency. Bilge (2010) defined agency, in line with Butler (2002), as a question of signification. In particular, as Butler (2002) argued “the culturally enmired subject negotiates its constructions, even when those constructions are the very predicates of its own identity” (p. 195).

Working within the intersectional frame, this paper, as mentioned, seeks to

examine the experiences of one middle-class Muslim mother. Aaishah had been home educating two of her three children for three years. The paper explores the intersection of social class, culture and religion, which factored in Aaishah's reported reasons for choosing to home educate her children. In line with Bilge (2010), the paper takes the view that intersectionality allows for the mediation between class, culture and religion to be considered in wider school choice discourses. In terms of class, the work of Bourdieu has been used. Bourdieu (1986/2011) argued that social class entails more than occupation; it is used here to refer to social inequalities that result from the possession of different forms and volumes of capital. Capital was used by Bourdieu (1977; 1986/2011) to suggest more than just economic resources or financial capital; it also refers to specific educational and social resources that can be deployed to advantage some families in terms of power over the social universe under consideration.

This paper also draws on Bourdieu's (1973; 1984; 1986/2011) theory of cultural capital. Bourdieu (2005) proposed that there were three elements of cultural capital. The first, objective artifacts, referred to the books, paintings and other cultural products the family possessed. The second element was the cultural practices and activities that a family engaged in, which include interest in and exposure to live concerts, opera, reading, taking speech lessons, playing musical instruments, certain culturally-valued sporting pursuits and the like. The third was institutional currency, which referred to the academic qualifications and academic style, as well as language forms that signaled an understanding of the school's language. For Bourdieu, the significance of cultural capital was that it was hierarchical and mirrored the hierarchy of economic capital (Henry, 2002).

In addition to social class and its forms of capital, this paper draws on theories of culture. Culture is understood, in line with Appadurai (1993) and Hall (1997), as a discourse that positions groups through discourses of difference. Appadurai (1993) suggested that cultural discourses are constructed around ethnicities that appear as natural labels. Similarly, Hall (1997) argued that cultural discourses offer "a sense of identity, of who we are and with whom we 'belong'—so it is tied up with questions of how culture is used to mark out and maintain identity" (Hall, 1997, p. 3). Further, just as Appadurai (1993; 1996) argued, Hall (1997) stated that cultural discourses construct identities through the marking of difference as well as the production, consumption and regulation of social conduct. These two theoretical fields, cultural capital and cultural discourses, as well as religion, were evident in Aaishah's positioning of her choice to home educate as we see below. It may be, and is argued in this paper, that economic, cultural and social differences between Aaishah and the local schools (both the public school and the Muslim school from which Aaishah resigned as a teacher in the mid-2000s) led to her decision to home educate.

Aaishah

Aaishah was born in Australia in 1976 to ex-patriot Pakistani parents. Her family came from the Peshawar Province in Pakistan and spoke the Urdu language at home in Australia. Living members of her family were from both Pakistan and Afghanistan. In the late 1990s she had qualified as a teacher in Australia undertaking her practicum placements in mainstream government schools before working in the local Muslim school. She had stopped working at the Muslim school in the mid-2000s because of a strengthening of her religious convictions which meant that she (a) could no longer share a staff room with male staff and (b) she did not agree with the sex mixing that occurred at the school.

Her husband was from a similar part of Peshawar Province in Pakistan as her parents. Aaishah and he had married in Pakistan and lived there for a number of years before returning to Australia to live in the same city as Aaishah's parents. Her mother was involved in the rearing of her three children. Aaishah had two daughters, Nasreen who was nine, Radhika was six and a son, Idris, who was almost three (the children's names are also pseudonyms). The children were all born in Australia. In 2012, Aaishah had found herself pregnant again with their fourth child. Unfortunately, the baby had died within 48 hours of its birth due to severe health problems. While this experience is not discussed in depth in the transcript, Aaishah did discuss it in depth "off the record." Aaishah also spent much of the "off the record" time showing me copies of the standardised tests her children were completing known colloquially in Australia as NAPLAN (National Assessment Plan Literacy and Numeracy—an annual assessment for children aged between 6 and 14—a test of literacy and numeracy skills). These tests are not compulsory, however, this compulsion is not clear from the government agency overseeing the tests (the National Assessment Program, NAP). Withdrawing from the tests is an 'opt-out' process, thus, all children are considered to be sitting the test. While most school children participate in these tests, children in alternative education settings (such as the Steiner school or the democratic schools local to Aaishah's city) often decide not to undertake the tests. It is unusual for home education families to sit the test, however Aaishah was a keen adopter of her children undertaking the test and showed me these tests her children had completed. In all cases, her children were above the curve on all measures.

Methods

Aaishah was interviewed in February of 2013. Her interview was part of a pilot study into the experiences of Muslim home education families. She then acted as a connection point between the home educating Muslim community and the researcher. The specific interview technique used to gather data was flexibly structured interviews. This type of interview seeks "in-depth understandings about the experiences of individuals" (Scott & Morrison, 2006, p. 134). The technique

was chosen because it allowed Aaishah to reflect and describe her experiences in-depth during a conversation that was loosely guided by several key questions. The resulting account was a co-construction of meaning between the participant and the interviewer (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998; Scott & Morrison, 2006; Fontana & Frey, 2008). The interview was open-ended and Aaishah was asked, after key questions were posed, to speak broadly about her perspectives on her decision to home educate her children (cf. Scott & Morrison, 2006; Yardley & Bishop, 2008).

Data were analysed using the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This approach allows researchers to “work with different approaches, multimethodically, and on the basis of a variety of empirical data as well as background information” (Wodak, 2001, p. 65). Wodak (2004) argues that the DHA allows for an analysis of the influence of wider social processes, relations and structures on the construction of discourses. While all approaches to CDA incorporate an analysis of the historical circumstances of discourse practices (Fairclough, 2001; Wodak, 2001; 2002; Rogers, 2004; Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui & O’Garro Joseph, 2005; Rogers & Mosley, 2008; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009), the DHA allows for a thorough analysis of how discourses contribute to the construction of identity discourses (de Cillia, Reisigl & Wodak, 1999).

The analysis focused on the argumentation strategy tool (Wodak, 2004). The argumentation strategy tool allows for an analysis of the arguments that a speaker frames in their accounts (Wodak, 2004; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). Argumentation strategies are useful in identifying the “set of processes which operate consciously or unconsciously at different levels of communication” (Titscher, Myer, Wodak & Vetter, 2000, p. 158).

The tool analyses five strategies of argumentation. The first is referential/nomination that involves membership categorisation and the construction of in and out groups (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009). The second is predication. Predication is evident in the attributions and stereotypes a social actor uses to label and evaluate others. The third strategy is argumentation, in which a social actor describes the positive and negative attributes they identify with another group. The fourth strategy is perspectivisation, which sees the speaker invoke ideological perspectives to position their point of view (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). The fifth and final strategy is intensification and mitigation, which sees the speaker mitigate or intensify the status of the other (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

It is important to note the researcher’s background may impact on the analysis of data. I was raised as a Catholic and educated in an elite private all-girls’ Catholic School in Aaishah’s city. I have no knowledge of the lived experience of Muslim women in Australia. Aaishah knew I have one child, a daughter who was a year younger than her son, Idris. I am friends with Aaishah’s younger sister. We all grew up on the same street in a working class city suburb where Aaishah and I still live.

Aaishah's story about her choice

The following excerpt is part of the interview with Aaishah. On showing her the transcribed data, she asked if I would limit my reporting of my interview with her to the following excerpt of data. Prior to the text in the excerpt below, Aaishah had explained that she kept her children away from the children in her street and the types of children and families that inhabited her neighbourhood. As we were talking, I asked Aaishah “what do you mean the problem [with the local children] is mixing?”

I think that's why there is [racial/ethnic and religious] conflict because it is so different, especially in this modern age, because everyone is mixing everywhere whereas 100, 200 or 300 years ago you didn't really have to mix at all. Now you have to actually because everyone needs the oil to fuel their life and existence so they have to mix. That's why there is so much conflict because of this mixing....Because of the environment—yes, what I said to you before was that I didn't use my own personal experience to make that home education jump but I have that education experience at school doing a full circle like from being a student to being a teacher—all of that to being a parent. No that environment—why put your children into something that is just negative in more ways....How can I explain it? When we were going through Primary School—In this day and age everything is more explicit and there would be just too much conflict...with [the values Aaishah was teaching at home] and also why would I expose my children to that? I don't feel the need to do it, so why? ...I know people in our street have many children. I would say living on this street alone there are probably about 40 kids...and a lot of them go to the local school and I've tutored the boy next door for a couple of years. He was a boy who needed so much support and he just didn't get it and he still hasn't got it. There's no home support either. In terms of like the grandmother will subscribe to the Athletics or whatever but she won't follow it up. She won't sit there with him and do it. She's like “that's it—I've done it” but I guess people don't want to admit it but she also admits that her education isn't too well either—she can read and write but that's about it. Then again, like I said it depends on what you know so I know that in order to be successful in education you have to have that home support with your child. You have to sit with them and help them through their homework. If they're having issues, get a tutor. If you can't do it then get that tutor but people have got other issues in their lives and just paying the rent can be a big deal for some people. Do you understand that?

In the above excerpt of data, several argumentation strategies can be seen. Firstly, Aaishah's account suggests a referential/nomination that involves membership categorisation and the construction of in and out groups. This strategy constructs references to group membership (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009), which appeared to be a significant element of the account. For example, she appears to argue that the local children belong to a different symbolic group to her family. The use of examples of the local children's educational attainment, the values to which Aaishah did not want to expose her children and the negatives associated with mixing in the wider community suggest that Aaishah was categorising the differences between middle class Muslim families like her own and the other families in her street.

Using strategies of predication and argumentation, Aaishah's account appears to further construct social group membership based on economic resources. The construction of social group membership was suggested by Aaishah's comments positioning the local children as socio-economically different from her children. Those families who could afford a tutor, such as hers, were nominated as different from families for whom meeting their basic needs, such as paying the rent, was problematic. In addition, their access to familial educational resources: "her education isn't too well either—she can read and write but that's about it," suggest that the local families did not understand or appreciate the importance of education: "the grandmother will subscribe to the Mathletics or whatever but she won't follow it up....She's like "that's it – I've done it." By implying that local parents, and guardians and carers such as the grandparents in the extract, are failing to support their children's education, Aaishah's account also suggests a strategy of argumentation.

Argumentation is seen in Aaishah's claims appear to relate to what Reisigl and Wodak (2009) term righteousness. Righteousness, in relation to Critical Discourse Analytics refers to claims that attempt to justify and deny inclusion and exclusion of certain groups. Thus, in relation to this text, righteousness can be read in Aaishah's strategies to help her children achieve academic success by excluding them from mainstream schooling. For example, in her account, she appears to prioritise that home support with your child, you have to sit with them and help them through their homework which is in contrast with her example family in her local community. The quotes of a judging nature suggest, in line with Reisigl and Wodak (2009) that her argumentation was based on righteousness, and a justification of her exclusion of her children from the local school and the local community. Further, her use (and presentaiton to me) of the children's excellent NAPLAN test results to demonstrate her effectiveness as a teacher of her children, based on Australian benchmarks for schooled children, also suggest she claims for her home education practices righteousness on educational grounds.

There was also an ideological perspectivisation strategy evident in the account used to position a point of view about why she kept her children away from the

local children. For example, she argues that the family values in her home were too different from the surrounding community, thus that environment was considered to be negative in more ways than merely educational attainments. The perspectivalisation strategy appears to suggest that there would be too much conflict of a values kind if the children went to school and, thus, a cognitive dissonance would occur for her children (cf. Gehlbach, 2010).

In addition, the excerpt appears to construct an epistemic intensification of the local children and their families. Epistemic intensification involves the establishment of negative parallels and equations that construct a discourse of distrust (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). The discourse of distrust is constructed about the local community. Most especially, the local community could not be trusted to be a positive influence on her children because she suggests they are not a positive influence on their own children. She mentions her dislike of mixing of the sexes and it seems from her comments that this kind of mixing is seen by her to create conflict, which is a further epistemic intensification suggesting distrust of the wider community.

Weaving concerns about social class, culture and religion in suspicions about the local community

The decision to homeschool appears to be based in an intersection of social class, culture and religion for Aaishah. Social class was most clearly evident in the discussion of the differences between her family and the other families in the neighbourhood, in particular the neighbour's family. Several forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1998) were evident in the argumentation strategies she appeared to employ. Firstly, her nomination strategy suggested that cultural capital, in the form of institutional currency, was significant in her decision to home educate. For example, Aaishah, a university graduate, compared her educational attainment with her neighbour's children's carer, their grandmother, encouraging maths but not following through with tutorial help.

Secondly, the predication and argumentation strategies focused, not only on the institutional currency of local families, but also the cultural practices and activities that were or were not valued in the local community. In terms of cultural practices and activities, the families in the community did not consider learning at home, seen in the account through the discussion of homework, to be a culturally valued practice. However, for Aaishah, learning was a culturally valued practice worthy of home support. She invoked a strategy of argumentation: in order to be successful in education you have to have that home support with your child.

Thirdly, the transcript excerpt included a strong emphasis on the socio-economic differences between Aaishah's family and the surrounding community. The nomination strategy suggested that the people in her neighbourhood held limited financial capital and this affected their educational perspective and the value

they placed on a thorough education because their priority was more basic and included survival expenses such as the “rent.”

It appeared culture was significant for Aaishah. For example, she was clearly concerned with protecting her family from the culture of the local community. Appadurai (1993) and Hall (1997) argue that culture positions individuals through discourses of difference. In Aaishah's account, the ideological perspectivisation strategy was constituted around the cultural differences Aaishah appeared to construct between her family and the local community. Her account states that the local environment was negative in more ways: “why would I expose my children to that? I don't feel the need to do it so why?” She appears to be constructing a sense of identity for her family as positive in contrast to the negatives of the local community. Thus, as Hall (1997) has argued, the cultural discourse that emphasised the difference between Aaishah's family and others in her community, were used to mark out differences between her family, their values and their beliefs, and others in the community.

Appadurai (1993) suggested that cultural discourses are constructed around ethnicities that appear as natural labels. The natural labels, seen in the account, were historical: it was a cultural discourse of difference suggested by the epistemic intensification that conflict between the Muslim and non-Muslim world. Conflict was inevitably due to everyone mixing over oil, whereas “100, 200 or 300 years ago you didn't really have to mix at all” and this avoided inevitable conflict Aaishah seemed to be saying.

Appadurai (1993) and Hall (1997) argue that cultural discourses construct identities through *marking* difference. As Aaishah was the member of a minority group, it would suggest that she would be aware of, and emphasise, the differences between her family and the majority of families, not only those in the local community. In the account provided above, Aaishah appears to suggest that there were many differences between her family and other families in her community. The epistemic intensification, evident in the account, marked differences between herself—who could be trusted to keep her children safe from the world that was, “in this day and age...more explicit”—and her neighbours. Her decision to home educate was, in part, predicated on her attempt to avoid “expos[ing] my children to that.” Thus, it appears home education itself positioned Aaishah's family through a cultural discourse of difference because it was an explicit attempt at producing and regulating *social* conduct in her children in particular ways and according to particular norms of her belief and values. This discourse of difference emphasized Aaishah's family's status as a minority that *further* marked their difference from the local community.

Finally, there was a religious element to her choice to home educate. In her account, Aaishah stated that in this day and age everything is more “explicit” which can be read as forms of social prohibition on behaviours and norms, or as seen from

a religious perspective. It appears Aaishah was attempting to protect her children from the explicit nature of the non-Muslim world by choosing home education. She did not want her children exposed to the non-Muslim values of the local community because they conflicted with her strongly held Muslim values. The result, if she had sent them to school, would have been religious conflict. Similarly, at the Muslim school, she would have had to compromise some of her religious values around sex-mixing as mixing of boys and girls in classrooms, in the playground and among staff was still in practice at the school and, as noted above, was not compatible with her own wishes. As mentioned previously, sex-mixing of staff and, to a lesser extent children, was the reason she had resigned from the school in the mid-2000s, so we can see from this action that it was extremely significant in her world view and due to her religious conviction.

Discussion

Aaishah's excerpt suggests that her decision to home educate shared the same strategic (Archer, 2010) concerns with the school choices of other middle-class parents. Archer (2010) used the term strategy to imply the ways that middle class, minority parents interacted with the schooling system to ensure advantages for their children. Aaishah employed similar strategies to the Black, middle-class mothers of the Vincent et al. (2012a; 2012b; 2012c) studies, as a means of managing risk. Risk was identified in previous work on minority communities at schools. The risks Aaishah sought to manage were both similar and different from those described in Vincent et al.'s (2012a; 2012b) work. The risks were both academic, in line with Vincent et al.'s findings, but also significantly spiritual/religious. In the extract, it appears Aaishah is attempting to manage the academic risks, associated with the local children's lack of achievement at school and their families' lack of interest in education. However, it also appears to be more than academic risk she is attempting to manage. The family's religious conviction, as she mentions the conflicts between religious and ethnic groups also suggests some of her motivations for home education were moral or ideological risk management. She appears to distrust the moral and ethical dimensions of the local community. Thus, the data suggests, in much the same terms as the ideologues in Van Galen's (1988; 1991) study of the reasons religious parents chose home education, she was trying to manage the risks of her children being exposed to ideas and concepts that conflicted with those of her family. Unlike the Muslim families of the Habibullah (2004) study, Aaishah was not a member of the local home education community and appeared quite isolated. In addition, unlike those families, Aaishah was using a formalised curriculum developed in relation to the National Curriculum documents, as Aaishah had trained as a high school teacher, and she was consistently following NAPLAN testing regimes, unlike most Australian home education families. She was rigorous in her approach to home education which, coupled with her following Australian

standardised testing regimes, implied she was able to measure her effectiveness as a teacher of her children. In relation to these measures her whole family, her children and herself as teacher, was performing incredibly well.

In addition, Aaishah appeared concerned that the local schools would not adequately teach her children, a common concern among ideologues identified by Van Galen (1988; 1991) and the mothers in Vincent et al.'s (2012a; 2012b) work. She appears to use arguments that construct the local schools as failing and thus, she was managing a risk of being failed by the schools by homeschooling her children. Further, Aaishah appears to have chosen to home educate for the same religious reasons as Van Galen's (1998; 1991) ideologues. For example, when she argued that the local schools, and their target families, held different values from her family, she was home educating because she was trying to control the context and content of her children's education and to keep it from "explicit" influences. She was managing the moral risks, in addition to the educational risks, posed by the local school. The decision to home educate appears to be, at least in part, drawn from her beliefs that it would protect the religious and social values of her children. Her decision also appears to have been a reaction to local issues and concerns, for example differences between local, non-Muslim and Muslim families because of the differences in values. However, it was more than a concern about local families, there was a global element to her concerns. To illustrate, she evokes history to argue there is [racial/ethnic and religious] conflict because, as the quote in Aaishah's excerpt makes clear "it is so different, especially in this modern age, because everyone is mixing". In this way, she was managing a local risk of a global conflict.

While Aaishah's specific circumstances are unique to her family, including the community in which she was living, her particular religious world views and her experience as a trained teacher, the data analysed here suggests there is a place for the use of intersectionality to examine and explain the choice to home educate among a wider cohort of Muslim families than this brief insight. The use of intersectionality has allowed here for more detailed analysis of Aaishah's circumstances, despite the brevity of the transcript used here. In line with Vincent et al. (2012b), the use of intersectionality as approach facilitated an analysis of Aaishah's choice to home education by considering the interrelated roles of class, race and religion. These three elements of her choice appear to offer a more detailed understanding of Aaishah's choice and avoid simplification, reduction and misrepresentation of this family's complex decision-making processes.

As noted in other studies of religious home educators, particularly in the Christian communities (Aruini & Davis, 2005), the decision to home educate is tied up in more than religious or, as Van Galen (1991) calls it ideological perspectives. These findings seem to support those of Kunzman (2009) who argues that there are wider, often non-educational concerns, to home education families who are orthodox in their faith and it concerns the intersection between state and secular

values in a democratic society. It also weaves concerns about what is best for the child academically and socially. Thus, I posit there is a lot more to Aiashah's choice than the simple reporting that is provided here. In line with Lees (2014), Aiashah's choice was one of exit, "[she] can exit the whole idea ... [her] 'educational movement' [was] unconstrained" (p. 123) and so she exited. Lees (2014) suggests this exit may be because parents are unable to express disaffection with schooling more broadly. It may be Aiashah chose to home educate, to exit schooling, because she could not express her concerns about schooling. Work to consider such social and political possibilities would be of interest in dissecting home education as a socio-political issue, independent of the other matters raised here around religious concerns about values.

There remains much work to be done to examine and understand the motivations of religious families who home educate, particularly non-Christian religions which have so far receive the most attention. In particular, the lack of research into the specific experiences of Muslim home education families needs to be addressed and we could say this is particularly pressing in the light of recent governmental concerns around segregation and extremism as have floated to the surface, post Paris "ISIS" attacks and at the end of 2015 in a new UK consultation on out of school educational settings and linked media reporting (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/out-of-school-education-settings-registration-and-inspection>, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-35152349> and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-35133119> .

As a minority community in Australia, as in the US and the UK, the experiences of home education, reasons for choosing this option and curricular decisions of Muslims are an area of interest because they may be different from other groups who home educate. The discussion of Aiashah's choice begins this task by analysing the account of one middle-class, Muslim mother. It also suggests that intersectionality provides a lens through which the choices of this particular group of home education families can be understood beyond the simplistic ideological understanding that is read into expressions of choice making when other factors are not considered in the analysis.

As I noted in previous research (English, 2013) and others have noted (Romanowski, 2001; Tator, 2002), there may be similar reasons for choosing to home educate as cited by parents who choose private or alternative schools. This could mean that looking at "Muslim" reasons to home educate is to look through a biased lens and at a red herring. With more extensive research the issue may prove to not be about religion or segregation at all for Muslim reasons but for educationally commonly considered social, economic and cultural reasons linked to divides across communities, brought about by market-driven school choice and fee-segregation issues. Thus, home education as choice for the Muslim community becomes one more *market* option, should the national law allow.

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