Iranian-Australian Women in Diaspora: Gendered and Racialised Discrimination and the Implications for Work and Organisation

A thesis presented to the

Department of Marketing and Management

In the Faculty of Business and Economics

Macquarie University, NSW

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Research (MRes)

By Maryam Mathers

Student Number: 43865062

Submission Date: October 10, 2016

Abstract

After the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 many Iranian women departed Iran and became culturally displaced. This thesis investigates this diaspora of Iranian-Australian women who have migrated to Australia to explore the ways in which they manage and negotiate their differences as they attempt to assimilate, adapt and belong to a new country. Despite extensive multi-disciplinary studies of diasporic populations, this thesis is the first in the field of gender, work and organization to utilize a transnational feminist approach to analyse how gender, ethnicity, religion and nationality shape assimilation and belonging when living and working in Australia. Adopting a narrative based methodology and semi-structured interviews, the life stories of ten first and second generation Iranian-Australian women are collected and reveal many complexities surrounding diaspora. The research demonstrates that both first and second generation women reconstruct their identities to assimilate and belong, whilst dealing with gendered and racialized discrimination, particularly at work. Despite many shared experiences, first generation women face different challenges compared to second generation women due to their age, language and cultural and religious beliefs. This research lays a foundation for further research of Middle Eastern women in Australia, a context beset by increasing Islamophobia and the condemnation of multiculturalism and minority inclusion within a multicultural, Anglo-Celtic society. This thesis begins to decolonize essentialist knowledge production of marginalized Iranian-Australian women and starts a conversation around their constant struggle in addressing gendered and racialized discrimination at work and ongoing challenges for their careers.

Acknowledgment

This thesis would not have been possible without the help of many outstanding individuals, to each of whom I would like to express my sincere gratitude.

First and foremost, I am very grateful to my supervisor Professor Alison Pullen, for her continuous assistance and guidance throughout my thesis. Her ongoing encouragement and support were extremely helpful during the entire this project and this thesis could not have been completed without her advice.

I am also extremely thankful to my family members and friends for their encouragement and support specially during the tough times of completion of this thesis.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the Iranian women who took time out of their busy schedule and allowed me to interview them for my research. I will always be grateful for their participation in this project.

Statement by the Author

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been previously submitted to any other institution or university for a higher degree. Except where otherwise acknowledged, this thesis is comprised entirely of my own work. In addition, Ethics Committee approval (5201600409) has been obtained for this research.

Maryam Mathers

October 10, 2016

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i.   Preface

I was only two years old when the Islamic revolution of 1979 happened, so I have no memories of the period before the revolution, when Mohamad Reza Shah – the last king of Iran – was ruling the country. When I was old enough to ask questions and wanted to know about Iran before the revolution, what I heard from my family and relatives contradicted what I heard from my school teachers. My family's recollection of old Iran was very happy and positive. The stories they shared with me reflected living in a free country, where no one was forced to follow a certain religion or ideology, and women were free to study, work and be independent. On the other hand, I heard so many negative stories at school condemning Shah and his government. From their perspective, Shah was a corrupt and autocratic leader who was a slave to the United States and its strategic exploitation of Iran and its natural resources. As a child I did not know what to believe. There were no other resources to get information from. So I believed what I heard at school. But the older I became, I began to realise what my family was talking about and I began to see what it was happening to my beautiful country and its people.

As a young woman, I began experiencing the gender discrimination and inequality around me. For example, one day when I was walking on the street with my school friends, laughing about a funny story, a morality police car pulled over and a bearded man started shouting at us: "shut up and shut your mouths! Why are you laughing so loud in public? Do you want to spend the rest of your day in jail? Why is your hair showing? Cover your hair? This is an Islamic country; don't you ever forget!" In another situation, I was questioned by the morality police and threatened with being taken to the prison because I was accompanied by a male friend, so we had to bribe them to let us go. As a young woman, I was not allowed to laugh in public, I could not ride a bike, I had to cover my hair and dress modestly to protect my chastity, and I was not allowed to be accompanied by a man in public unless he was a family member. These are some of the restrictions women have to endure in Iran. This was not how my family lived before the revolution and it was not how I and many other young Iranian women wanted to live. It was and still is an ongoing and humiliating everyday experience. The economic hardship was also another hurdle for young university graduate women like me who were not getting paid well enough to live independently so we either had to live with our parents or find a rich husband to take care of us! This is the kind of culture that Iranian government has been promoting since its inception; a culture of domesticating women. Did I really want to live like that? Not being able to cope with these ongoing struggles, I was

becoming depressed with no hope for the future, and I decided to leave my family and my career behind, accept the consequences of leaving home, and begin a new chapter of my life in a new country. This is not just my story, it is the story of many young educated Iranian women like me, except I am one of the few who has been given an opportunity to write about it.

While working on this thesis, I have been on a journey of my own. It has been exciting to be given the opportunity to write about my own people, reflect on my own past and present memories and experiences and be able to bring them to the forefront in an academic publication. But it was also painful at the same time. It gave me the opportunity to go back in time and review the history of Iran and Iranians over the last 40-50 years, but it also brought all my bitter memories to the surface, those memories which I had buried since I moved to Australia. I began watching documentaries and reading stories and memoirs about Iran and Iranians pre- and post-revolution. There were very emotional days, filled with sadness for what happened to my beautiful country and the questions which I had no answers to: what happened to my country? what happened to us? Fifty years ago we did not need passports to travel to the United States or any other country, because we were PERSIAN, and today we are not welcomed anywhere because we are IRANIAN. I cannot believe how a political event, a revolution, can change a country, its people and others' perception about them in such a short period of time. What happened to us? Who are we?

These questions were always in my mind while I was writing this thesis. Am I an Iranian? I do not live in Iran anymore, and I am married to an Australian man and therefore living between two cultures. Am I an Australian? I am an Australian citizen but I do not look, speak and behave like 'Aussies'. When people ask me where I am from, if I say Australia – which is very unlikely – there is always a following question: what is your background? And this is the kind of conversation that I try to avoid, because it always leaves me feeling confused about my own identity and what other people think about me. It may not be difficult for a French person who lives in Australia – for argument's sake – to answer this question, but it is not as easy for an Iranian, whose country is associated with terror and war, to give an answer to this identifying question. My proud Persian heritage cannot rescue me in these situations, because not many people associate Iran with Persia anymore.

This thesis is very much influenced by the ongoing identity crisis faced by Iranians around the world, and in particular Iranian women who suffered inequality and discrimination in their home country for simply being women. As a woman who was born, raised and lived in the Islamic Republic of Iran, who was constantly humiliated, belittled and denigrated by male

morality police for not wearing a proper hijab or talking with a man in public, I understand other Iranian women's frustrations and feel their pain of not being counted as equal and treated as second class citizens. In addition to that, those who left Iran, like myself, in pursuit of freedom and equality, also experienced other challenges associated with being displaced while trying to adapt to the new country's culture, tradition, norms and standards. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore Iranian-Australian women's stories of displacement and diaspora, and their transnational identities while living between two cultures.

'Who am I?' is an extremely important yet complex question to answer for any immigrant who is displaced and lives between two or more cultures. It is not just about how we define ourselves, but it is also how others perceive and interpret us. I can be an Iranian and very proud of my heritage and culture, but not so much when I reveal my identity to a white Australian who knows nothing about Iran but what he or she has heard about us from the media. So my aim is to echo, even in a low volume, what identity means to displaced women like me, how they attempt to reconstruct their identities according to their surroundings, and how they manage and negotiate their transnational identities in a white-dominated country. And I also intend, through this research, to reaffirm the importance and significance of feminist transnational studies in a colonial context in order to deconstruct and decolonise white-influenced studies of gender, work and organisation.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Research Review

This research has its origins in diasporic experiences of ethnic women and in engagement with transnational living and working activities. Drawing on transnational feminist studies, this research aims to explore the narrative s of ten first and second generation Iranian-Australian women who migrated to Australia after the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979. Given the complexity and ambiguity of Iranian historical and political situations in recent years due to the occurrence of events such as the 1979 Islamic revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, the purpose of this research is to explore how first and second generation Iranian-Australian women manage and negotiate their differences in attempts to assimilate, adapt and belong; and their experiences of gendered and racialised discrimination in living and working in Australia.

Extensive research exists within the field of gender, work and organisation (Calás et al., 2012, 2013; Holvino, 2010; Pio et al., 2013, 2014), organisational studies (Acker, 1990, 2006), and diversity and inclusion (Janssens & Zanoni, 2004, 2007) which consider the intersections of gender, race and ethnicity when studying minority women. Prominent transnational feminists such as Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Mohanty and Sara Ahmed (Ahmed, 1999, 2003, 2007; Mohanty, 1988, 1991, 2013; Spivak, 1985, 1988) highlight the importance of studying minority women from the transnational feminist perspective to shift the feminist focus from a universalist view to a more anti-essentialist view. Several scholars in the field of gender, work and organisation (see: Esser et al., 2004; Esser and Tedmanson, 2014; Pio, 2007) studied minority women using transnational feminism and the ways in which their transnational differences facilitate or hinder their engagement and interaction with management and entrepreneurship. However, there is still limited research about minority women in the field of gender, work and organisation, in particular on how minority women transnational identities influence the ways in which they negotiate their differences in their everyday and working activities (Esser et al., 2004; Esser and Tedmanson, 2014). Transnational identities (also known as diasporic identities) are associated with migration and displacement either by force or voluntarily (Cohen & Vertovec, 1999). Although there has been much multi-disciplinary research about migration and displacement amongst migrants and displaced populations, Iranian women are the least studied minority women. Iranian women not only had to endure unfair and discriminatory practices imposed by the Islamic state of Iran (Afshar, 1985, 1986), but to deal with challenges and difficulties of migration and displacement. Those who left

Iran and moved to countries such as the United States and Australia, in pursuit of freedom and liberation, found themselves struggling with diasporic challenges and difficulties such as identity crisis, exclusion, discrimination and marginalisation due to their ethnicity, nationality and religious differences (Ansari, 2015; Ghorashi, 2003; Moghadam, 1988; Shaditalab, 2005). Although a great number of Iranians moved to Australia since the 1980s (ABS, 2011), limited research has been conducted on the Iranian-Australian population, especially in the field of gender, work and organisation.

Australia as a multicultural country is home to many nationalities, ethnicities and religions. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) shows 28.2 percent of Australia's estimated resident population, equivalent to 6.7 million people, was born overseas. Despite being a diverse and multicultural country, Australia has recently grappled with an inundation of fear of terrorism and terrorist attacks. Racism and xenophobia, especially towards the Muslim minority, has grown and the rhetoric of stopping Muslim migration to Australia, endorsed by independent politicians such as Pauline Hanson, has received public attention (ABC News, 2016). Such discriminatory anti-migration views have been receiving publicity through the media as the number of terrorist activities by radical Muslims around the world are increasing, fuelling the public fear of Muslim-Australian citizens. Such misconceptions about a certain minority group in a society can have negative impacts on every aspect of their lives. Thus, it is essential to study the minorities in Australia to explore and understand their experiences of assimilation, adaptation and discrimination in living and working in Australia. Poynting & Mason (2008) describe assimilation as the acceptance of immigrants and a welcoming attitude toward new arrivals by native Australians, and adaption and assimilation of immigrants through learning Australian culture, norms and standards and the native language.

To fulfil the gap in the literature and establish theoretical and methodological developments for future research, this research is focussed on an underrepresented minority group – Iranian-Australian women – using a transnational feminist approach and narrative analysis. The transnational feminist approach is an appropriate methodology which enables minority individuals to share their life stories and reflect on their experiences of diaspora, without further homogenisation and categorisation (Burck, 2005). This methodology provides an appropriate platform in unsettling the essentialist approach which has dominated most western feminist studies of minority women (Mohanty, 1988, 1991; Narayan, 1997). Narrative and life story are terms which will be used interchangeably in this thesis as they both enable the narrator to express identity more clearly and allows nuances to emerge (McAdams, 1997; Essers et al., 2014). Through exploring displaced and diasporic first and

second generation Iranian-Australian women and analysing their narratives of their experiences of integration and assimilation, this research aims to explore their diasporic experiences and the ways in which their identities are constructed in the process of being and becoming (Hall, 1991). It is important to study both first and second generation Iranian-Australian women for two main reasons. First, these two generations have one important distinction, which is their age. First generation women are old enough to remember the Islamic revolution, the Iran-Iraq war and their memories of migration, whereas second generation women have limited or no memories of Iran and its historical events before moving to Australia; therefore, their life stories and narratives of diaspora entail different shades and colours. Second, methodologically, there has been no research which studies both first and second generation Iranian-Australian women and their diasporic experiences in the field of gender, work and organisation. Ultimately, this research aims to explore their experiences of discrimination in their everyday activities and workplaces. To better develop this exploratory research the following research questions are proposed:

1. What are the experiences of first and second generation Iranian-Australian women in managing and negotiating their differences in their attempt to assimilate and belong?
2. What are the experiences of first and second generation Iranian-Australian women in facing and managing gendered and racialised discrimination in their workplaces?

In the following pages, I first provide a background of Iranian women pre- and post-revolution that helps better understanding this minority group. Next, after a brief description of the Iranian population in Australia since 1980, I provide a brief history of multiculturalism and multicultural policies in Australia since its inception in order to understand Australia's position in relation to migration and ethnic minorities.

After this introductory chapter, this thesis is structured as follows. I develop the notion of transnational identity as a concept that helps in understanding the intersections of gender, ethnicity, nationality and religion of Iranian-Australian women within the colonial and post-colonial debates. After giving an in-depth discussion of the transnational feminism approach and narrative analysis to study minority women, I present ten narratives through which I reflect on the common emerged themes to illustrate how Iranian-Australian women negotiate their differences in attempts to assimilate and integrate in living and working in Australia. I also explore some of the complexity of diasporic identities constructed by political, historical and cultural events and how they influence Iranian-Australian women's experiences of displacement and migration. In the discussion and conclusion chapter, building upon existing gender, work and organisation research within the context of post-colonialism, I explore how

colonialism influences the diasporic experiences of minority women. I further argue that not only do the socially constructed transnational identities of Iranian-Australian women influence the ways in which they assimilate and belong, but also the ways in which societies and organisations perceive and accept minorities' transnational differences in accordance to their socially and politically influenced beliefs such Islamophobia. I conclude by outlining the implications for work and organisation and the need for future research of minorities in the field of gender, work and organisation.

1.2. The Background of Iranian Women

The Islamic revolution of 1979 is one of the main reasons that many Iranians left Iran. Amongst the large number of Iranian migrants, many professional women left Iran due to social, economic or political hardships and travelled to places such as North America, Europe and Australia in pursuit of a better life (Afshar, 1985; Pio & Essers, 2014). Having to deal with their gender, ethnicity and minority status, they assimilated and adapted to norms and standards of living set by the host countries through cooperative and reciprocal approaches (Ghorashi, 2003). The unwanted and involuntarily migration has had its toll on many Iranians living outside of Iran, instigating the construction and management of multiple identities in the process of adapting and assimilating to their host countries' culture. This research, for the first time, studies both first and second generation Iranian-Australian women, their diasporic experiences and the ways in which they manage adapting and assimilating with the norms and standards of Australia. In particular, Iranian-Australian women's multiple identities, and the ways in which they narrate self as a dynamic process are analysed. This approach to women's identities follows much multi-disciplinary literature which captures a dynamic view of self and other which constantly acquires new meanings and forms through interactions with social contexts and within historical moments (Giddens, 1991; Hall, 1990).

1.2.1. Pre 1979 Islamic Revolution

The 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran witnessed the Islamic state overthrow the Shah, the last King of Iran, and ended 2,500 years of glorious Persian monarchy. The fundamental Islamic changes that were imposed on Iranians post revolution had significant impact on different aspects of their lives. Iran, prior to the Islamic Revolution, was undergoing a 'modernisation'

period initiated by the Shah and set to be implemented between 1963-78 (Shaditalab, 2005, p. 36). This significant time was the beginning of a period of social, cultural and economic growth in Iran. From a socio-cultural perspective, Iranian women, especially those who belonged to the middle-class and educated societies, found themselves in a supportive atmosphere whereby they were encouraged to go to university and apply for high ranking positions such as in the civil service and professional occupations (Afshar, 1985; Hoodfar & Sadeghi, 2009). Iranian women enjoyed holding the right to vote and they were encouraged to participate and take part in political arenas such as parliamentary positions. The emphasis on education and empowerment of women resulted in an increase in the number of women employed across different industries and sectors (Afshar, 1985; Hoodfar & Sadeghi, 2009). Freedom of choice enabled them to freely decide whether to wear or not to wear *hijab* in public. For instance, the majority of middle-class and educated women who were active in society and workplaces were followers of European fashion and dressed according to the most recent Parisian styles. On the other hand, some of the devout and somewhat less educated women who belonged to a more conservative and religious society preferred to appear in public wearing veils or *chador* (the Iranian veil which covers the head and body completely) (Afshar, 1985). In addition to the advantages noted, the right to contest for the custody of their children, free abortion on demand, and a ban on polygamy were some of the rights women fought to acquire and were granted before the inception of the Islamic state in 1979 (Afshar, 1985). Whilst Islam, and in particular 'Shi'a' as a branch of Islam, remained the dominant religion in Iran and the clergy continued to act as religious leaders in explaining the teachings of Islam, the Shah's main focus was to transition Iran to a secular country where the religious dictum and secular practices were aligned (Afshar, 1985); subsequently strengthening Iran's international position in the Middle East and in the world. However, this futuristic and reformist approach gradually developed a massive ideological gap between minority secular and majority religious Iranians and ultimately resulted in a change of direction for Iran's future.

Before the revolution, Iranian women were largely classified to two major categories: the middle-class, secular and educated women and the devout, less educated and less privileged women (Afshar, 1996; Hoodfar & Sadeghi, 2009). Women were encouraged and supported by the government to study, work and live freely and independently, allowing them to feel liberated and free to pursue their desired lifestyle and career. However, women brought up in a traditional Iranian family with strong religious beliefs did not appreciate this gesture, believing it to be a westernised tendency to degrade women to sex objects (Afshar, 1996). Lack of a broad and comprehensive education system in rural parts of Iran disadvantaged

many rural girls, resulting in 64.5% of rural women being illiterate compared to 44% of urban women by 1976 (Shaditalab, 2005). Thus, they were strongly inclined to be in opposition with the progressive outlook of the government in modernising the country and progress towards closing the gap between being a developing country and a developed country.

Iranian women played a significant role in changing the course of the country's political path through active participation in mass demonstrations in protest against the regime's alleged political and economic corruption, alliance with the US in exploiting Iran's natural resources and westernised inclination to demean women as sex objects, especially in film and entertainment. Despite their ideological differences, Iranian women were united in protesting against the autocratic monarchist regime and in demanding a democratic and egalitarian government (Ansari, 2015). Little did they know that their actions could result in empowering a theocratic and dictatorial Islamic state and in taking away their freedom which they took as granted under the monarchy's constitution.

Although Shah's progressive plans in encouraging technological advancements, expansion of foreign trades, and improvement of education and health systems aimed to achieve rapid economic growth, Iranian citizens' anger and frustration about Shah's autocratic decision-making about Iran's future clouded their vision and distorted their views about the future of Iran as a whole. Nevertheless, women's positions and participations in economic, social, political and foreign affairs were progressing upwards during the Shah's period and prior to the Islamic Revolution of 1979. However, the dawn of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 altered the ways in which Iranian women progressed in their life and work trajectories and compelled them to a formidably regressed and primitive future.

1.2.2. Post 1979 Islamic Revolution

After the Islamic Revolution of 1979, and soon after the Islamic state assumed power, they initiated and implemented new polices derived from Sharia Islamic Laws such as discriminatory employment policies, compulsory veiling for women, gender segregation in work places and classes, and restriction of women's education and employment. With such discriminatory practices, thousands of women once more poured into the streets, but this time to demonstrate against the regressive laws and regulation imposed on them by the new regime (Hoodfar & Sadeghi, 2009). Nevertheless, Iranian women were forced to comply with the new Islamic laws proposed and implemented by the new Iranian government including the

compulsory hijab (Afshar, 1996). After the Islamic Revolution, women who used to practice law and work alongside men in equity had to seek consent from their fathers or husbands to travel, work and even go to university. Marginalised and ostracised as gender subordinates in their home country, Iranian women were excluded and barred from their positions as judges and lawyers by the Islamic regime; were denied, and deprived from, their legal rights including rights to divorce and child custody; and were dominated by a male, authoritarian culture reinforced and encouraged by the new government (Afshar, 1996).

The Islamic Revolution's regressive approach towards women and women's rights was further encouraged by publicly announcing the compulsory veiling called *Hijab* and reduced appearance of women in public to protect them from becoming victims of sexual objectification, and to safeguard their dignity and purity by remaining in their homes as modest and obedient daughters or wives. The new regime's strong belief in men's superiority over women – physically and intellectually – supported by the Koran, led to the argument that women are biologically inferior, making them perfect candidates as carers and supporters of their men (Moghadam, 1988). Furthermore, the Islamic regime and its strong supporters, who were mainly clerics, strongly disagreed with what western countries offered to their women as the freedom and right to pursue their own life and career. In their regressive minds, western women had been unnaturally displaced and pushed into pathways which were unsuitable for and incompatible with the gentle and sensitive nature of women, imposing more burden on them in operating efficiently in their domestic and work duties (Moghadam, 1988).

In the first decade since the Islamic Revolution, which is also known as the transformative era (Shaditalab, 2005), the Iranian government found its ground by establishing new organisations such as the morality police to ensure the Islamic laws, rules and regulations were followed and respected by the public. For a thorough and comprehensive revision of the education system, all universities were shut down for almost two years. The contents of school books were completely transformed so they were aligned with the Islamic laws (Afshar, 1985). For instance, pictures of women were removed from all text books and replaced with male images or images of women wearing the Islamic veiling and performing domestic duties. Sex segregation was implemented in schools, government offices and most public places. Once the universities recommenced, the classes were segregated, women were barred from entering certain faculties and studying law and engineering, and religious minorities such as Baha'is were permanently barred from entering universities (Shaditalab, 2005).

The new legislations which were issued based on the principle of men's superiority gave consent to the justice system to exclude women from many of their legal rights (Afshar, 1996). Custody of children at the time of divorce were given to their fathers regardless of the situation. The right to divorce at will and the right to legally marry four women without asking their wives' consent were granted to men. More disturbing was the legislation change that reduced the minimum age for marriage for women to nine years old. Before the Islamic Revolution, polygamy was banned and considered illegal, divorce and custody matters were to be decided in the family courts where both parties had opportunities to defend their positions and the minimum marriage age for girls was eighteen years old (Afshar, 1985).

The first leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini's announcements of compulsory veiling for women, dismissing women from their high-ranked, decision making positions such as judiciary positions, and emphasis on the importance of motherhood and domesticity, led to the women employment rate declining dramatically (Afshar, 1996). Backed by the Islamic laws, husbands could ban their wives from working and constrain them to obey their commands and perform domestic duties. The government inclination in keeping women away from the public sphere was strongly supported by Ayatollah Khomeini. In one of his sermons, he addressed women office workers and compared them to destructive hurricanes and accused them of being a distraction for men and bringing sedition, shame and disgrace to workplaces (Afshar, 1985). The only areas which were acceptable for women to work were nursing and education fields because of the nature of the work and the sex segregation in health and education systems.

As a result of such radical changes in Iran's constitution which excluded women from many rights, many Iranian families left Iran and moved to places such as the United States, Europe and Australia in pursuit of freedom and a better quality of life. The next section will provide a brief description of the Iranian population and demographic in Australia.

1.3.   Iranian Population in Australia

Australia is a multicultural country and has been a host to many different nationalities and religions from the early stages of its colonisation. The most recent data reveals that 28.2% of Australia's estimated resident population (ERP), which is equivalent to 6.7 million people, was born overseas and 43.1 per cent of people have at least one overseas-born parent (ABS,

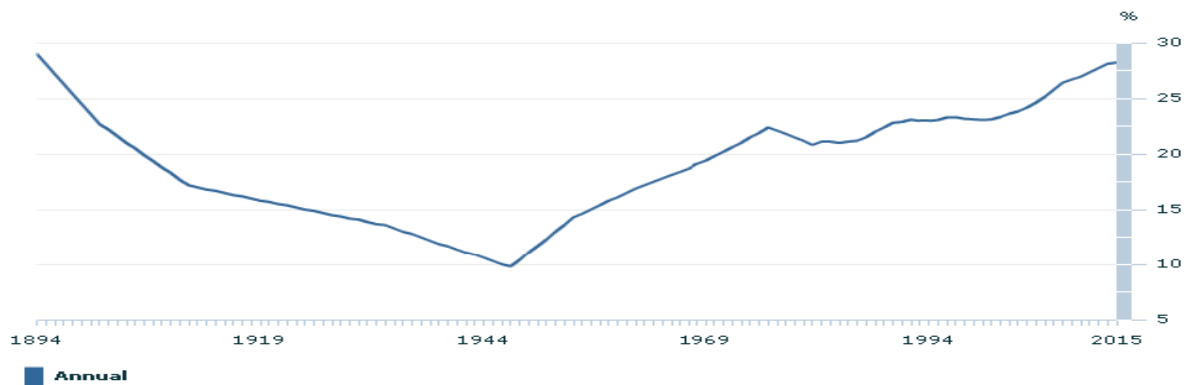2011). As it is shown in figure 1, there has been a constant and gradual increase in immigration since 1944.

Figure 1: Australia's population born overseas

The most recent data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2015) reveals that the UK (5.1%), New Zealand (2.6%), China (2.0%) and India (1.8%) hold the highest percentage of the overseas population in Australia. Figure 2 illustrates the changes in immigration flow of the top 10 countries every five years since 2005. Amongst them, India and China represent a massive increase, particularly in the last 10 years, whereas there is a decrease of immigration movement stemming from countries such as the UK, Italy and Germany. This data also shows how multicultural Australia is.
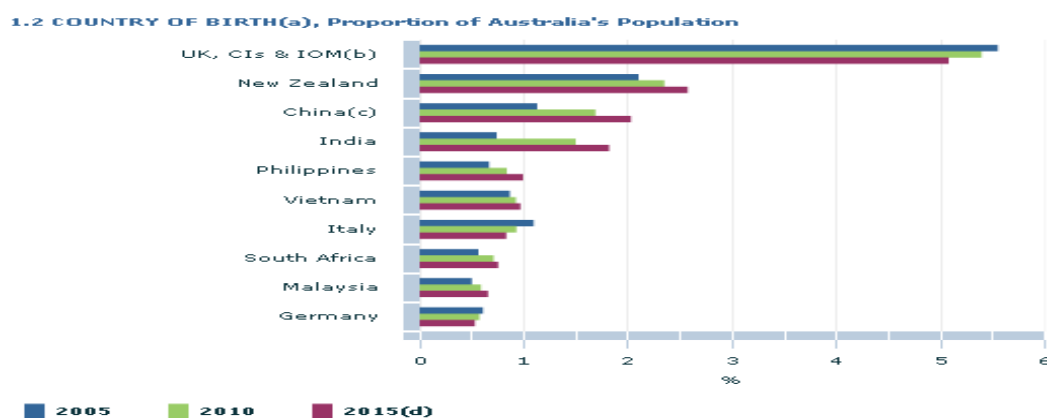
Figure 2. (a) Based on the top 10 countries of birth (excluding Australia) at 30 June 2015. (b) United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man. (c) Excludes SARs and Taiwan. (d) Estimates for 1992-2011 have been recast and estimates from September quarter 2014 onwards are preliminary

Iran is one the countries which began its contribution to the Australian population from the 1980s. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of 2011,
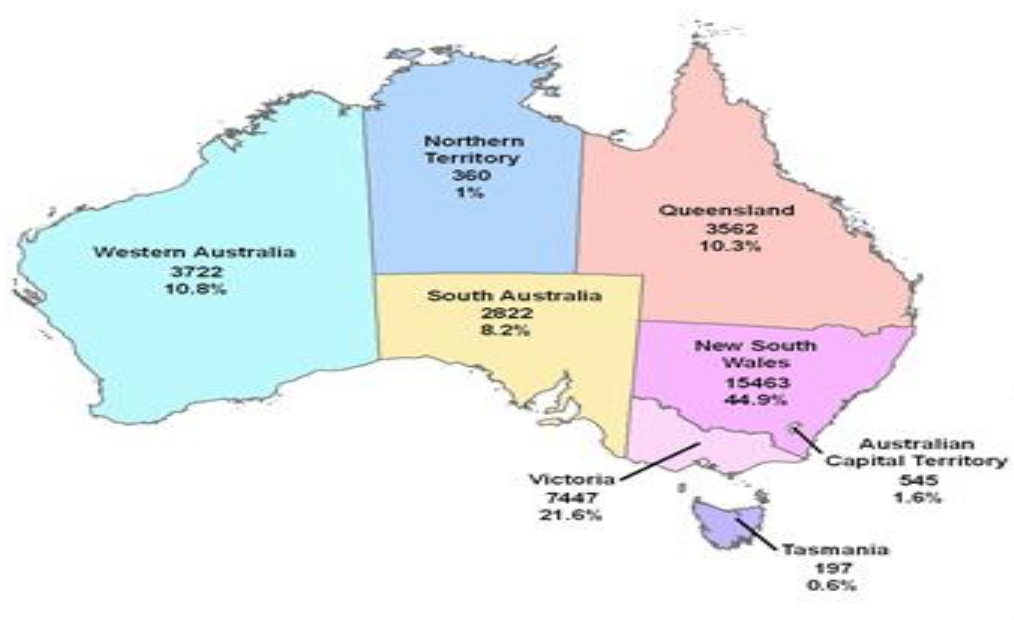
Figure 3: Iranian Population in Australia - 2011

34,000 Iran-born people live in Australia (fig. 3) which indicates a substantial increase of 52.8 per cent from the 2006 Census (fig. 4).
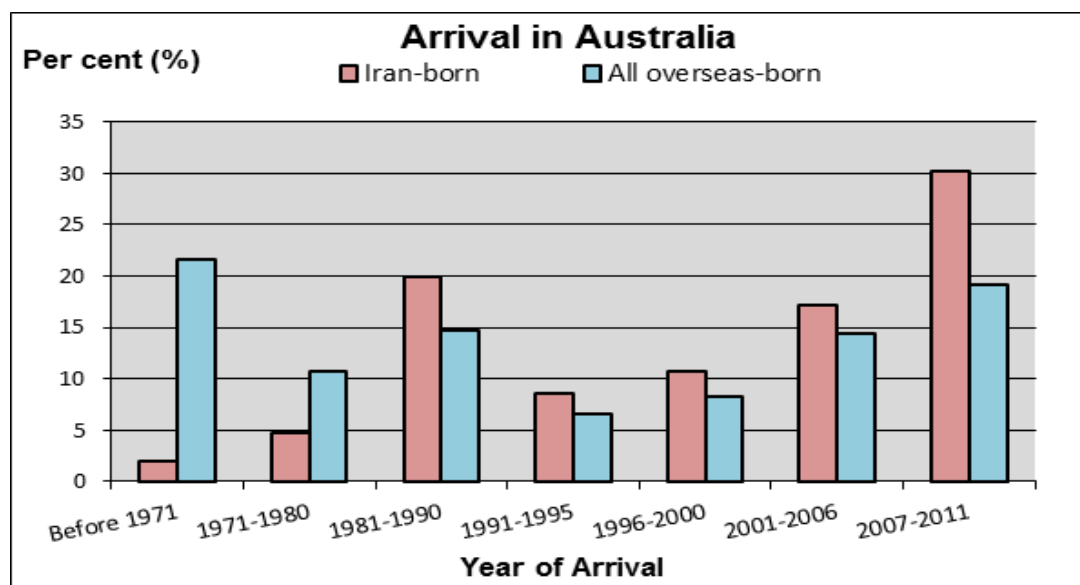
Figure 4: Iranian Population Growth in Australia since 1971

As fig. 4 depicts, the Iranian population in Australia, in comparison with all overseas-born immigrants, has soared significantly since 1981. This increase coincides with the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran and the Iran-Iraq war of 1980 which caused many Iranians to leave Iran.

Figure 5 illustrates the age and sex range of the Iranian population in Australia which indicates that the majority of the population consists of young men and women aged 25-35.
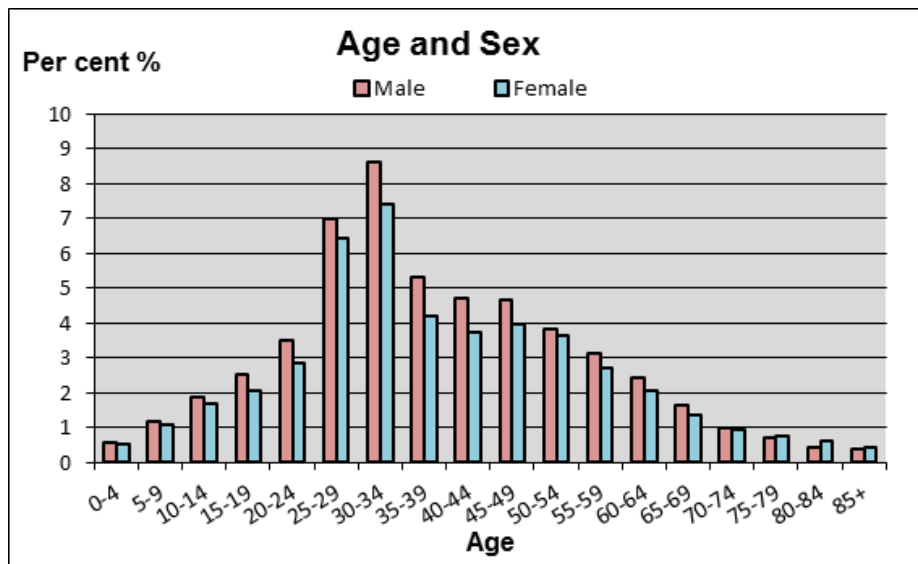
Figure 5: Iranian Population Age and Gender Percentage

With slightly a higher percentage of males across the board, the second highest age group is between ages 35-50 which gradually declines towards older age groups.
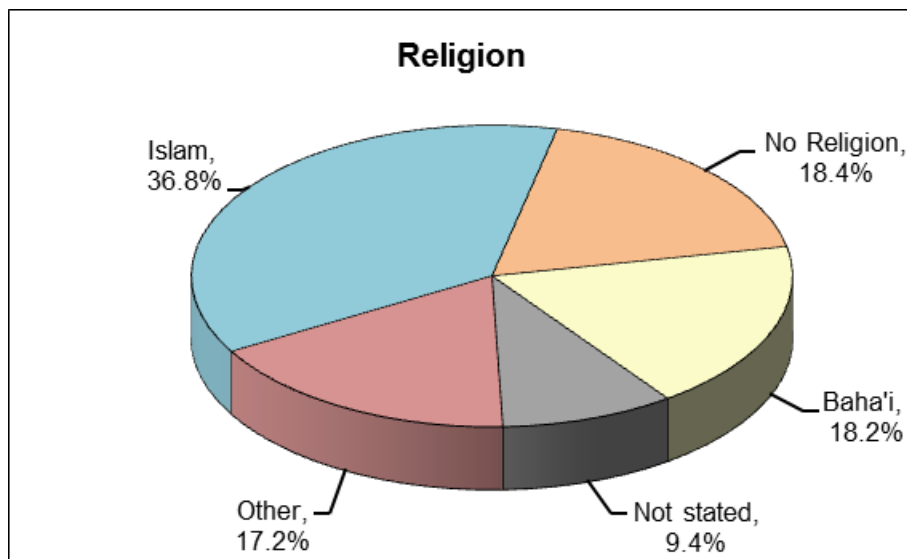
Figure 6: Religions of Iranian Population in Australia

It is also recorded that the majority of Iranians who migrated to Australia in 1981 were Baha'is who had to leave Iran to escape religious persecution. Luckily, prior to tightening the immigration policies and practices by the Howard government (Stratton, 2009), there existed a special humanitarian assistance program initiated by the Australian government which facilitated their visa application and settlement in Australia (ABS, 2011). Economic and political hardship as well as political and religious persecution were and still are important reasons for Iranians to leave Iran for Australia since the dawn of the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran.

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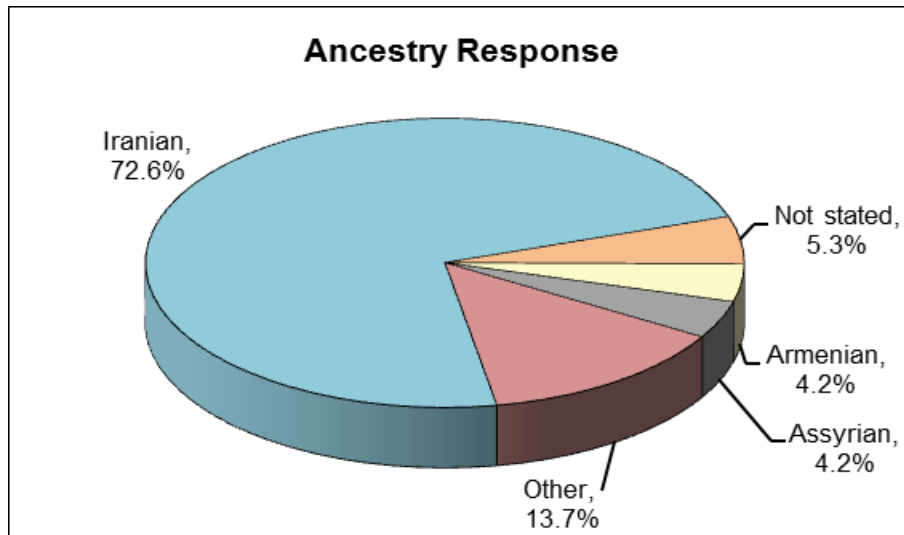
Figure 7: Iranian Ancestry divisions in Australia

Whilst it is known that the Shi'a is the primary religion of Iran and Iranian people, other faiths and religions such as Baha'i, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism have their own followers amongst Iranians, particularly amongst Iranian immigrants (Mostofi, 2003). As figure 6 illustrates, only 36.8% of Iranians who live in Australia are Muslim and 18.2% indicated to follow Baha'i faith, whilst the remaining 45% indicated as having no religion, not stated and other. Whilst the bulk of the Iranian population's ancestry is indicated as Iranian or Persian, there are minorities who, although were born in Iran, have different ancestral origins such as Armenian, Assyrian, Kurdish and Turkish (fig. 7).
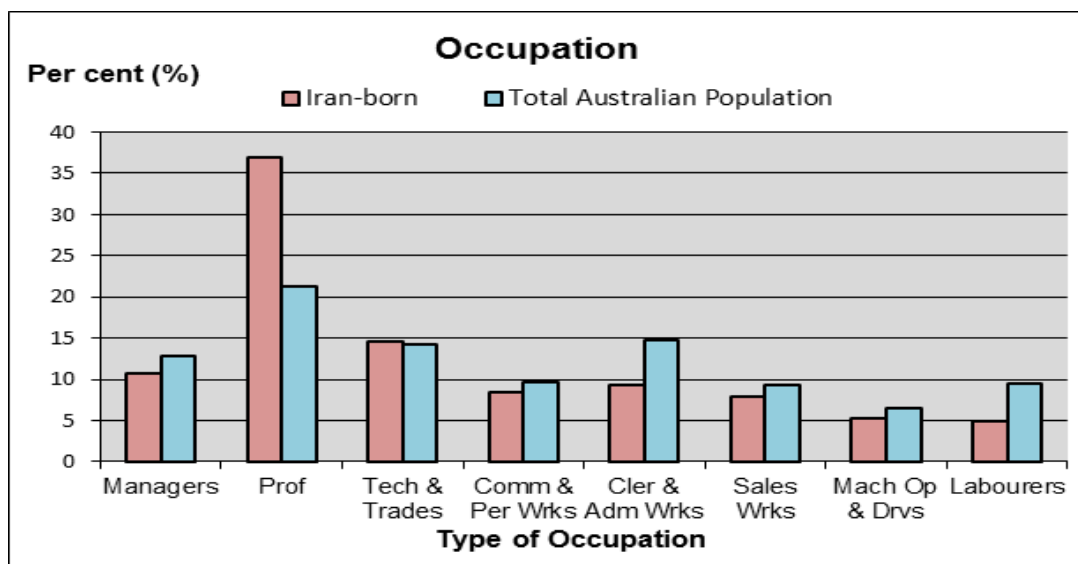
Figure 8: Occupations of Iranian Population in Australia

As figure 7 indicates, over 71% of Iranian population in Australia speaks Persian (Farsi) which is the main language of Iranian (Persian) people.

According to the ABS, over 35% of Iranians in Australia are engaged in professional jobs which is almost double in comparison to the total Australian population (Fig. 8). Although there is no gender classification, without considering the motivation and antecedents, it is apparent that the Iranian population values the importance of acquiring professional positions. Furthermore, as figure 9 illustrates, 40% of the Iranian population in Australia hold tertiary qualifications, whereas less than 20% of the total Australian population has a degree or higher degree qualification. These findings unveil the Iranian population's tendency to pursue tertiary education and professional employment.
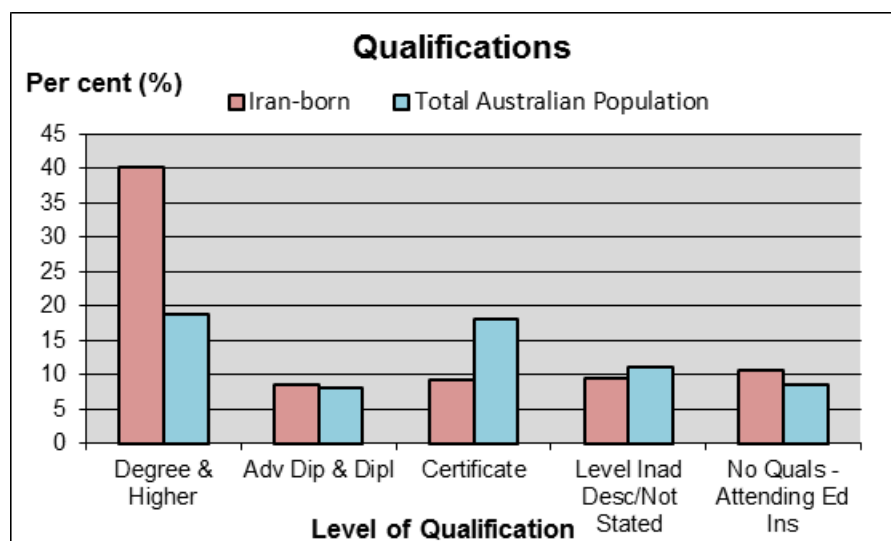
Figure 9: Level of Qualifications amongst Iranian Population in Australia

This brief statistical overview of the Iranian population in Australia indicates two very important points. First, it shows that Iranian migration to Australia has soared since the Islamic revolution and is continuing to grow. Second, it demonstrates the heterogeneity of Iranian culture, religions and ideology, language, education and profession. This brief review puts Iranian population in Australia into perspective and emphasises the significance of understanding this complex minority group in a multicultural country such as Australia.

1.4.   Australia and its Multiculturalism

The introduction of a multiculturalism policy in Australia goes back to the early 1970s and has been a key element of its national cultural policy which is presumed to promote and encourage diversity, inclusion and equality across Australia (Schech & Haggis, 2001). Bob Hawke (1984-1991) and Paul Keating (1991-1996), two Australian former prime ministers, were great advocates of the multiculturalism policy and as a result endorsed and implemented programs in facilitating better education and work services for immigrants. Multiculturalism

is introduced as a way to display the government and the country's repugnance towards the old 'white Australia' policy and as a way to recognise, acknowledge and appreciate the cultural differences that exist within what is now called 'new Australia' (Ang & Stratton, 1998). As part of the multiculturalism scheme, integration and assimilation discourses were introduced which entailed, in one hand, acceptance of immigrant and a welcoming attitude towards new arrivals by native Australians, and on the other hand, adaption and assimilation of immigrants through learning Australian culture, norms and standards and more importantly the language (Poynting & Mason, 2008).

Despite bipartisan endorsement of multiculturalism by both political parties until the mid-90s, multiculturalism eventually and gradually has lost its popularity among conservative, white politicians as well as ordinary Australians. This discrepancy and divergence of views were accentuated during the Howard government, which was covertly against multiculturalism policy and in support of 'mainstream' Australian views. This approach received more momentum since the advent of Pauline Hanson – a working class white Australian who turned into a politician about 20 years ago – who began her protest against multiculturalism first by attacking aboriginal communities, then Asians and most recently Muslims, and who strongly believes in full assimilation of immigrants in forming a unified 'One Nation' Australia (ABC News, 2016, Poynting & Mason, 2008). Hanson, in her maiden speech to the Australian Parliament in 1996, clearly stated:

> "For too long ordinary Australians have been kept out of any debate by the major parties. I and most Australians want our immigration policy radically reviewed and that of multiculturalism abolished. I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians. They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate. Of course I will be called racist but if I can invite who I want into my home, then I should have the right to have a say in who comes into my country. A truly multi-cultural country can never be strong or united." (Australianpolitics.com).

When campaigning for the 2016 election as the leader of 'One Nation', she once again slammed multiculturalism by asserting that the 'Land Down Under' (Australia) is in danger of being swamped by Muslims (ABC, 2016). The current reoccurring terror attacks by Islamic fundamentalists and ISIS have created fear and disbelief about Islam and all Muslim populations worldwide and Australia is not immune from it, hence, the rebirth of Pauline Hanson and her followers. To white Australians, multiculturalism no longer represents a united, multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-linguistic country when the unemployment rate is soaring, the number of asylum seekers and boat people is rising, and the terror threats

are overwhelmingly escalating. Pauline Hanson also pointed at those politicians who promoted multiculturalism and blamed them for what she called 'reverse racism', and stated that "we now have a situation where a type of reverse racism is applied to mainstream Australians by those who promote political correctness and those who control the various taxpayer funded industries that flourish in our society servicing Aboriginals, multiculturalists and a host of other minority groups" (Poynting & Mason, 2008, p. 236). Such statements and rhetorical discourses endorsed by conservative and mainstream Australian politicians such as John Howard and Pauline Hanson, along with current local and global economic and refuge crisis are sufficient to induce and normalise racism behaviours.

The racial riots of Cronulla in 2005 is one of the most significant events in the history of New Australia, and marked a day where white Australians tried to reclaim control of the Australian nation from others and in particular those of Muslim/Middle Eastern descent through violence. Propagated by media and through spreading anecdotes of misogynistic and un-Australian attitudes of young Middle Eastern men, bashing and attacking Middle-Eastern looking beach-goers took legitimacy within the domain of the Cronulla riots (Poynting, 2006). In a gendered analysis of this event, Christina Ho (2007) argues that through associating Muslim Middle Eastern men with misogynistic behaviours, white Australia legitimised western colonial supremacy in bestowing gender equality and protecting women's rights which colonised communities are unfit to provide. Ho further argues that it seems as though women's rights protection and 'other' women emancipation discourses have warranted giving Australians the permission to promote and conduct anti-Muslim racism behaviours.

Multiculturalism, whilst acting as a platform to promote diversity and inclusion in societies, cannot necessarily provide solutions for racism and racist activities within a multicultural context (Berman & Paradies, 2010). Racism in Australia is a complex issue due to lack of public interests and deliberate avoidance in engaging in racist discourses. However, Australians have always unconsciously and in a subtle way engaged in racist acts whether through visible antisemitism and Islamophobia or when refusing to employ someone with poor English language competency (Gershevitch, Lamoin, & Dawes, 2010). The rhetorical discourses of multiculturalism and anti-racism seem hypocritical when "the fantasy of a 'White Australia' remains in, or has been restored to, the position of a powerful, even dominant aspect of Australian political and cultural discourses that work to normalise and privilege the Anglo Celtic experience" (Hattam & Atkinson, 2006, p. 684). Hattam and Atkinson (2006, p.685) argue that from a pedagogical point of view, racism and anti-racism discourses must look beyond race and into other forms of belonging and identity in order to facilitate national reconciliation.

In this chapter, I have provided a background of Iranian women pre- and post- the 1979 Islamic revolution, discussed how this significant historical and political event has changed the ways in which Iranian women are regarded and perceived by the new Islamic government of Iran, and explained why many Iranian women left Iran since the Islamic revolution. I have also provided a brief statistical description of the Iranian population in Australia, before discussing multiculturalism and its history in Australia. Given the background provided, the next chapter will draw on multi-disciplinary literature to establish a theoretical foundation for studying Iranian-Australian women and their transnational challenges.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I analyse the diaspora and diasporic identities and its relationship with minority migrant women through reviewing existing literature in the various fields such as sociology, immigration studies, work and organisation, gender and ethnicity. Subsequently, I intend to highlight the similarities and discrepancies in the existing findings by considering the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and religion, in order to draw attention to the gaps in the gender, work and organisation literature. In so doing, firstly, I will define diaspora and how it fits this research. Then, upon exploring colonialism and post-colonialism, I will elaborate on diasporic identities and the ways in which they are constructed within transnational feminism. Transnational feminism, as the primary framework for this study, will be discussed and its relevancy to this research will be explained and justified. In the following section, I will introduce Iranian women in diaspora and discuss their experiences and challenges in defining and restructuring their diasporic identities in order to adapt and assimilate. As this research aims to understand and explore diasporic women, the relevant existing literature will be discussed in order to identify the gap and establish the research contribution and originality.

2.1. Transnational Identity in Diaspora

Diaspora and transnationalism have been used interchangeably amongst scholars (Dwyer, 2001; Quayson, et. al. 2013; Vertovec & Cohen & Vertovec, 1999). To establish a common ground within this research, an explanation of their fundamental differences is necessary. While transnationalism considers globalisation and refers to larger movements of people, information and capital on a global scale, diaspora is mainly associated with the migrations and displacements of people whether by force or voluntarily (Cohen & Vertovec, 1999). Diaspora is also defined as "displaced communities of people who have been dislocated from their native homeland through the movements of migration, immigration, or exile" (Braziel & Mannur, 2003, p.1). Diaspora is often linked to geographical entities such as nation-states, contemporary forms of movement, displacement, and dislocation and should not be separated from historical and cultural specificity (Braziel & Manner, 2003). The significance of displacement and diaspora is not solely about entering a new country, but refers to entering a

society with different cultures, class orientations, and different expectations of gender roles which creates disruption and distortion of traditional cultural practices such as parental duties and spouse power relations, and patriarchy (Braziel & Mannur, 2003; Pessar & Mahler, 2003).

In providing a broader definition for diasporic populations and their attributes, William Safran (1991) defines diasporic populations as those who first, have left their country of origin and have been settled in a foreign region whether voluntarily or otherwise; second, recollect nostalgic memories, visions, and stories from their homeland; third, incline to believe that they are not fully accepted by their host country and feel partly isolated; forth, consider their country of origin as their motherland and ideal home which they will eventually return to when conditions are appropriate; fifth, strongly believe that they should collectively retain and restore their original homeland, its safety and prosperity; and sixth, maintain their relation to their homeland whether personally or collectively as their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are defined by the existence of such relationship.

Safran outlines that diasporic populations share some forms of common identity shaped by their association with a common place of origin and similar cultural and linguistic attributes. Whilst their sense of belonging may be confused and their attempts at assimilation and integration with the norms and standards of their host countries are somewhat complicated, diasporic individuals' shared national and cultural features bring them closer to each other and enable them to form networks and organisations to unite and stay in touch with their national identities (Vertovec, 2001). As Clifford (1994, p.311) states: "Diasporic discourses reflect the sense of being part of ongoing transnational networks that include the homeland, not as something simply left behind, but as a place of attachment in a contrapuntal modernity". Following Ghorashi (2004), it is argued that these networks and transnational contacts are imperative for the process of constructing, articulating and negotiating diasporic identities within the new environment while preserving and sustaining their national and cultural identities. Therefore, diasporic populations are partially identified by their shared and mutual historical and cultural memories which foster formation of their collective characteristics and attributes.

Identity, with its own psychological and sociological roots, is defined by various social constructions such as gender, ethnicity, religious and nationality and cannot be structured and developed independent of external stimuli (Connolly, 1991). Connolly (1991, p.64) states "identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized". Those who belong to diasporic populations such as immigrants and refugees

learn to live with multiple identities and multiple cultural languages and to constantly negotiate between them (Hall & Gay, 1996). In understanding diaspora and diasporic experiences, it is imperative to be aware of and to avoid the homogenisation and reduction of the ongoing struggles of diasporic communities and the denial of their historical and material differences. Subsequently, to understand experiences of individuals who are 'othered' based on their political, economic, historical and social structures, it is necessary to consider individuals in the ways in which they make sense of self, others, and their circumstances (Falcón & Nash, 2015). In other words, it is imperative to take into consideration individuals' diasporic experiences and their impacts on their personal and social activities in order to encourage an individualistic viewpoint and to minimise further homogenisation (Mirza, 2013). Therefore, this research not only aims to enable marginalised Iranian-Australian women to share their experiences of displacement and assimilation, it is more so to reinforce and to question the inevitable categorisation and compartmentalisation.

In so doing, the following section aims to expose some of the complexity of diasporic identities formed by political, historical and cultural events and the ways in which such events influence individuals' experiences of displacement and migration. Accordingly, what seems appropriate is the understanding of diasporic identities in relation to the formation and establishment of colonialism and consequently post-colonialism. Building upon existing gender, work and organisation studies within the context of post-colonialism, this following section will explore the ways in which colonialism influences diasporic identities of ethnic, migrant women.

2.2.   Diasporic Identities within Colonial and Post-Colonial Debates

Diaspora and diasporic identities cannot be considered without taking into account the notion of colonisation and postcolonial discourses. Colonialism as a disputable concept operates within a hegemonic binary between coloniser and colonised and is associated with supremacy and political control of a nation over another nation or a society (Dirlik, 2001, p.430). Distorted political and economic relationships and power structures between coloniser and colonised have been considered to be the major contributors to oppression, dominance and exploitation for decades (Jack & Westwood, 2009). Chandra Mohanty (1988, p.61) argues "the term colonization has been used to characterize everything from the most evident economic and political hierarchies to the production of a particular cultural discourse about what is called the 'third world'". The superiority of white men is assumed as a given and their

absolute jurisdiction over economic, political and social spheres introduced and encouraged oppressive power relations and further categorisation of gender, race, nation, and ethnicity (Lewis & Mills, 2003).

To overcome organised power and exclusive control held by colonisers from so called 'empires' including Great Britain, the United States, and most European countries, post-colonialism was developed to address issues such as exclusion, exploitations, discrimination and inequality. Post-colonial scholars such as Ronald Hyam in Empire and sexuality: The British experience (1990), and Edward Said in Orientalism (1978) delved into addressing the issue of binary power structure from an empire as well as an orient point of view. However, there is no mention of women's agency and limited reference to women feminists' work within the same domain (Lewis & Mills, 2003). With the intention of emancipating women globally and overcoming male domination, white feminists exclusively worked within a universalist framework where they believed and endorsed the incongruous idea that all women encounter similar challenges and difficulties regardless of their ethnicity, race and class (Mohanty, 1991). It may be argued that a systematic and essentialist feminist approach can be beneficial for going head to head with masculine domination of colonial supremacy and for gaining some credibility. However, insensitivity to differences such as race, ethnicity, religion and ideology can ultimately defeat the purpose of emancipation of all women.

When considering globalisation, displacement and decolonisation, recent prominent scholars, such as Gayatri Spivak, Sara Ahmed, Marta Calás and Chandra Mohanty, realised the need to shift the focus from a universalist view to a more anti-essentialist one in order to recognise third world, subaltern women's struggles and challenges associated with their gender, race and class. Mohanty questions white feminists for not recognising the significant differences of oppression and resistance between white women and women of colour and criticises their universalist approach in attending to women's issues in a global scope (1988, 1991). For instance, generalising and pigeonholing "an average 'third world' woman [as] essentially poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, family-oriented and victimized and so on", without considering their historical, cultural and racial specificities can in fact lead to a predisposition for an essentialist view of the third world by western feminist scholars (Mohanty, 1988, p.64; 1991, p.56).

Feminist scholars and activists and their continuous efforts in disputing marginalisation and questioning colonialism can be credited for constant changes in existing policies such as diversity and inclusion policies in workplaces. For instance, Sara Ahmed (2007) investigated the concept of diversity in Australian higher education and the ways in which diversity

practitioners use such concepts as a solution to overcome issues associated with the term 'equity'. Ahmed's findings state that repetitive use of terms such as 'equity' within institutions may have an adverse outcome and defeat the very purpose which they intend to achieve. The impact and effect of diversity in organisation is also dependant on diversity advocates and their level of influence and capacity to affect change within institutions (Ahmed, 2007, p.254). Furthermore, the ineffectiveness of diversity and equity policies can be a consequence of colonial doctrine embedded in and weaved through the very foundation of western institutions.

'Third world' women have continually been discriminated and oppressed largely due to their skin colour, language, accent, and so forth. In recent years and particularly since September 11, 2001, Muslim women wearing veils encounter more hostile reactions and gendered Islamophobic discrimination than ever before (Mirza, 2013). These narrowed and politically charged views which are covertly propagated by the western media ultimately circulate fear and anxiety amongst 'westerns' against 'the others' which feeds into further exclusion and marginalisation (Ahmed, 2003). As the world's view towards certain ethnic backgrounds such as Middle Eastern and more specifically Muslim is changing, the need to further study these minority groups and their daily experiences, challenges, and struggles of living and working in western countries becomes more salient. As an individual who belongs to a minority Iranian community in Australia and who holds experiences unique to being a Middle Eastern woman, I cannot deny the importance of continuous and rigorous research which holds at its core ethnic women and their daily predicaments and struggles.

Notably, significant historical and political events such as 9/11 and the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979 (Nacos, 1996) have the potential to provoke further racism, prejudice and bigotry towards anyone who fits the stereotypical Muslim stature which in fact can advocate further essentialism and reductionism. The reoccurrence of terror attacks in recent years around the world, mostly initiated by Islamic fundamental groups, such as 2014 Sydney hostage crisis known as the 2014 'Sydney siege' and 2016 Paris attacks, create irrational fear of all Muslims to the point that new discourses surface, such as the question of banning Muslim immigrants from entering certain countries such as Australia. While dealing with such Islamophobic public beliefs and through negotiating their embodied differences, 'Muslim others' have to constantly construct and reinvent themselves in order to be integrated and assimilated with emancipated western societies while facing various forms of discrimination (Essers & Tedmanson, 2014; Mirza, 2009). For instance, in studying young British South Asian Muslim women, Dwyer (2000) discovered the ways in which their diasporic identities are constantly articulated and negotiated within social and local contexts. The complexity of their multiple

identities leaves them no choice but to simultaneously navigate between their Islamic and British identities as a process of self-realisation and integration within specific social relations (Dwyer, 2000).

Moreover, most minorities who develop multiple identities learn to rise above occasional or sometimes constant racist and discriminatory behaviours by utilising their national and cultural resources. For example, Ehrkampt studied Turkish immigrants in Germany and the ways in which they negotiate their multiple identities within their own communities and across their local interactions. By introducing their transnational activities and establishing communal places such as mosques and teahouses, they engage and interact with the locals who occasionally conduct rejecting and racist acts (Ehrkamp, 2005). Nevertheless, placing their transnational identities within their host country enables them to create a place where they feel safe and comfortable; a place where they belong. Sara Ahmed describes home so eloquently as a "familiar place, the place that is comfortable and comforting, is the in-between space…. Such a space is comforting, not because one has arrived, but because one has the security of a destination, a destination which quite literally becomes the somewhere of home" (Ahmed, 1999, p.330). Evidently, there exist numerous powerful transnational organisations – some of them established and run by diasporic women – which have managed to raise funds for various sectors in the homeland and in the diaspora, demonstrating their tendency in interconnecting their motherland experiences with that of their transnational ones in order to belong (Werbner, 2002). Nevertheless, the fundamental and to some extent paradoxical differences between local and transnational values, traditions and rituals, to some extent, present conflicts and pose challenges in attempt to connect and bond. Living within a colonial context and white supremacy which covertly operates across developed countries, displaced communities find themselves in a situation where past and present events dictate how the world interacts with them. For instance, inevitable and constant change of political and historical circumstances in the world such as declaring a 'war on terror' after the incident of September 11, 2001 and the more recent Syrian refugee crisis intensify the magnitude of hardship and difficulties imposed on certain minorities; in particular Muslims. Moreover, as numerous existing post-colonial studies highlight (as mentioned earlier), if reductionist and generalist views continue to exist, stereotyping and discriminatory behaviours of certain communities continue to become normalised. In the following section, I choose transnational feminism as an appropriate framework to further investigate such issues discussed so far and to determine in what ways and to what extent this research can contribute to bridging the gap in the literature.

2.3.   Transnational Feminist Approach

In this section, transnational feminism and the justification for its employment will be discussed. Falcón argues that "a transnational feminist scholar actively seeks to shift epistemology away from an imperialist model of knowledge extraction and instead collaboratively shape it, the tenets of transnational feminism offer a paradigm in which to cultivate a methodology to practice decolonizing forms of research" (Falcón, 2016, p.174). Decolonisation can be described as a way in which the status quo is challenged and deconstructed, allowing for creation and re-building of a new school of thought; a critical understanding of the underlying assumptions of research practices (Falcón, 2016; Smith, 1999, p.20). It is argued that the asymmetrical power relations between the west and the rest, white and the others, and particularly Anglo-Saxon women and women of colour exhibit how colonialism has constructed, institutionalised and normalised the othered women over the centuries (Pio & Essers, 2014). Furthermore, the distorted hegemony and hierarchical power which fits within Imperial privilege - as a consciousness of the benefits associated with US citizenship status and white supremacy - solidifies an unnecessary global citizenship hierarchy for the minority of the world's population and differentiates US citizens (and other western countries) discursively from virtually everyone else in the world. Imperial privilege enables white scholars to yield their power in impacting the research and even assume that they have a right to speak out for others (Falcón, 2016; Pio & Essers, 2014). Thus, transnational feminism challenges western and white-dominated research models, acknowledges power dynamics, and calls for non-western researchers to provide a platform for marginalised gendered minorities to speak back to western audiences (Pio & Essers, 2014).

Renowned scholars such as Kimberle Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks have succeeded in challenging reductionist and essentialist influenced feminism in various ways and through highlighting their political, economic, social and cross-cultural inequalities. For instance, in critiquing the notion of universal sisterhood (Morgan, 1984) which builds upon a monolithic patriarchy allowing unity and connection across women globally, transnational feminists including Grewal and Kaplan (1994), and Alexander and Mohanty (1997) emphasise the significance of racialised gender in global capitalism which situates women so differently from each other on national, local and global levels. They also argue that these differences cannot be clearly defined in a pure local or pure global context and separate from each other; in other words, they insist in challenging the nation-state localities and go beyond

the politically and hegemonically structured national, local and global spaces. In gender, work and organisation studies, Joan Acker (2006, p.77) states that "gendered and racialized class structures have differing national characteristics produced by different political, social, and economic histories". Consequently, it can be said that within the globalised world, transnational feminists encourage reconsidering the ways in which gender, race and ethnicity are observed, the ways in which they are constructed and articulated in different locations, and the ways in which they interact and intersect in relation to practices of segregation, marginalisation and exclusion within national, local and global settings (Calás et al., 2010). Furthermore, the assumptions made by white feminists about marginalised women and their struggles and their attempt in emancipating women of colour from their patriarchal constraints can further objectify and reduce them to individuals who are incapable of fighting their own battle. That does not mean that the works of white women and their commitment in giving voice to oppressed women are not appreciated, but it is more about enabling oppressed women to talk about their oppression in their own way and giving the platforms to do so. Bell Hooks (1989, p. 9) in her book 'Talking back' argues "moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of "talking back" that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject – the liberated voice".

2.4.   Iranian Women in Diaspora

Iranian identity is a complex term to describe due to the reasons which will be discussed throughout this section. From the perspective of cultural identity which "implies a continuity between the past and the present" (Hanaway, 1993, p.147), Iranian identity is constructed and influenced by past and present events and circumstances including the glorious Persian Empire and its successes and defeats, language, religion and ideology and more recently the Islamic Revolution and diaspora. Despite being proud of their ancestors and their renowned cultural and historical achievements, Iranian people in today's world are constantly challenged by Western culture and their dominant ideology. Whilst their endless battle in making sense of their own displaced identities, reserving their ancestral triumphs, and establishing a common ground where both glorious past and ambiguous present reciprocally meet, Iranian people face ongoing identity challenges in such an ever-growing, globalised, postmodern world (Yarshater, 1993). The recent Iranian displacement to Western countries

has situated Iranians in positions of adapting cross-cultural, cross-linguistics hybridity and constructing a hyphenated identity to integrate with new culture and norms (Rahimieh, 1993). Since the advent of the 1979 Islamic revolution and the beginning of Iranian migration, many Iranians found themselves homeless in a sense that Iran, the country which they used to call home (*vatan)*, does not exist anymore (Graham, 1997). Such a profound event made the case of Iranian people in diaspora (*ghorbat)* unique and complex which calls for further studies and an in-depth understanding of antecedents and consequences of Iranian's exodus. Moreover, the heterogeneity of Iranian immigrants in terms of their religion, ideology, linguistic, ethnicity, and class reinforce the significance of such comprehensive inquiry in the context of diasporic identity (Mostofi, 2003).

Displacement and distance from country of origin and its embedded culture and heritage, which often causes identity conflicts and to some extent power relation distortions, can also be a reason for an immediate urge to preserve what is left of cultural and ideological values. Cultural resistance usually develops when diasporic experiences coexist with discrimination and exclusion experiences which may build a sense of resentment against the dominant culture. Whilst diasporic populations experience a constant battle in balancing cultural differences to sustain their patriarchal relations and ideologies, experiences of women in diaspora contradict and to some extent disturb such efforts (Moghissi, 1999). Gender power imbalance in certain cultures encourages men's prerogatives in public and private spheres; however, living in exile distorts such power arrangements and enables women to feel liberated and to pursue an economic and social independence which was taken away from them under the male-dominated hegemonic family structure. In his research, Darvishpour (2000) studies the distribution of power in Iranian immigrants' families in Sweden and analyses the extent to which immigration influences such power distribution; to ultimately investigate the impact of power distortion on family conflicts, separation and divorce. Improved legal rights and Swedish legislation protecting the rights of women, easier access to sources of employment and education, and non-patriarchal Swedish culture have increased Iranian women's power resources, enabling them to acquire more economic and social power than pre-migration in Iran. Such drastic changes in their everyday life circumstances and situations influenced by the present diasporic experiences enable their cultural identities to transform to a state as Stuart Hall (1990) describes as a status of 'becoming as well as being'. Through the process of 'becoming', they reinvent and construct their dynamic identities through their lived transnational experiences of 'being' migrants in transnational locations. Being marginalised and stigmatised as Iranian women in their country of origin and the exhilarating sense of becoming emancipated and liberated from the cultural dogmas in a new

location unravel new opportunities and challenges. Whilst celebrating their power acquisition and independence, these newly liberated women still must constantly negotiate with and navigate through circumstances associated with being othered, discriminated and racialised.

Understanding the importance of the context of location, inclusion and acceptance, Ghorashi's analysis of diasporic identities highlights the complexity of assimilation of Iranian women in California and the Netherlands (Ghorashi, 2003). Whilst narratives of Iranian women in California illustrate a healthy level of acceptance and recognition by the host country, stories of those living in the Netherlands demonstrate a strong sense of exclusion and separation inflicted on them by Dutch society. Contrary to the Netherlands, social inclusion and acceptance in California enables Iranian women to construct their identities through combining their past and present and allows for an easier assimilation and adaptation process. The strong connection between past and present amongst Iranian-Americans living in California motivates them to maintain close cultural ties to Iran and Iranian culture through nostalgia and memories. Constantly constructing multiple identities in different places develops an identity confusion which is more pronounced amongst second generation Iranian-Americans trying to make sense of who they really are (Mostofi, 2003). In examining the autobiographies of three second generation Iranian-American women, Naghibi discovers a common description of the diasporic condition as loss – "a loss of childhood, a loss of cultural identity, and a loss of (national) home" (Naghibi, 2009, p.87). Despite some diasporic narratives which are predominantly focused on embracing the spaces between home and away, the primary emphasis on the trauma of revolution by second generation Iranian-American women indicates the extent to which they associate with Iranian culture through holding on to their nostalgic memories passed on to them by their parents and/or occasional travels to Iran; and the ways in which they recreate a version of Iranian culture for themselves and their families in the United States where they were born and raised (Naghibi, 2009). Moreover, a study of first generation Iranian immigrants in Iowa demonstrates their strong intention and confidence in their abilities to raise their children with Iranian cultural values. While Iranian-American parents have socially adjusted to the American norms and customs through learning their language, recognising their events and rituals, and socialising with their American friends and neighbours, the majority of these parents approve of exogamy as opposed to marrying non-Iranians – in order to maintain and preserve their "ethnic purity" (Chaichian, 1997). This approach reinforces the seriousness of identity confusion amongst both first and second generation Iranian immigrants.

As discussed, the narratives of displaced Iranians and more specifically Iranian women highlight the complexities and ongoing struggles in constructing identities which enable them

to move between terrains of 'being' and 'becoming'. In other words, being born and raised in one country and becoming a citizen of another country due to social, political or historical reasons such as migration and exile can in fact develop an identity crisis and lead to a constant 'tug of war' between being or remaining Iranian, and becoming a hyphenated one (e.g. Iranian-American, Iranian-Australian). It is, therefore, imperative to continue exploring and investigating these complexities in different contexts and more specifically within multicultural locations such as Australia.

2.5. Transnationality and Intersectionality in Gender, Work and Organisation

There exist many studies of social and organisational inequalities and their relation to individual and social differences, however, they fail to explicitly understand and analyse complex interconnection of gender, race and class and their intersection in producing inequalities such as discrimination, stereotyping and marginalisation (Acker, 2006). As Acker argues, heterosexuality, age and physical disabilities in organisations can disrupt the organisational structures and processes compelling them to activate certain discriminatory practices which may or may not be positive or beneficial for implementing equality practices in organisations. However, lack of comprehensive understanding of such complex intersectionality (Holvino, 2010) can lead to further homogenisation and normalisation. For instance, a British Pakistani female manager is a unique and complex individual whose identity is constructed from an intersection of British nationality and diasporic experiences of being a Pakistani Muslim woman – who deals with organisational marginalisation based on categorisation of gender, race, and ethnicity (Pio, Syed, & Arifeen, 2013). Many organisations armed with their diversity programs classify individuals to a certain 'socio-demographic category' (Janssens & Zanoni, 2005) and so consequently further marginalise and reduce individuals. Diversity studies have mainly focused on how diversity programs are produced by the organisations and how certain socio-demographic characteristics have shaped the organisations' collective approach in constructing diversity policies (Janssens & Zanoni, 2005). Recent studies of diversity and inclusion in organisations indicates the importance of individuals' engagements and involvements with diversity and inclusion practices (Collinson 1994, 2003; Zanoni and Janssens, 2004; Ahmed & Swan, 2006). Caroline Gatrell and Elaine Swan (2008) also argue that minorities continuously confront discrimination, inequality and oppression in workplaces. Furthermore, Zanoni and Janssens argue that "minority employees

are not passive receptacles of control but rather, as agents, reflect and act upon it in more or less compliant ways and that, through their reflections and actions, they can possibly create space for their own micro-emancipation" (Zanoni & Janssens, 2007, p.1373). However, there are few empirical studies which investigate minority employees' engagement with power structure and diversity and inclusion culture in organisations (Zanoni & Janssens, 2004, 2007). Particularly, there exists little research (see Pio & Essers, 2014; Syed & Pio, 2010) in the field of gender, work and organisation on how certain individual experiences such as displacement and exclusion alter the ways in which minority employees perceive power and control within organisations.

To further understand marginalisation and categorisation, intersectionality as a well-regarded framework is widely employed by the vast majority of feminist scholars. Kathy Davis (2008, p.68) describes intersectionality as a framework which "refers to the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these intersections in terms of Power". Intersectionality and transnational feminism are seen as two separate standpoints which can be mutually constructive and equivalently relevant in understanding asymmetrical power structures, inequality and privilege as well as institutionalisation and marginalisation issues (Falcón & Nash, 2015).

Being a woman has been and still is a challenge but being a woman of colour has been, still is and will be an issue so long as colonialism prevails, although Judith Butler (1990) foresees potential positive changes in gender oppression as interconnectedness and the dynamic intersection between gender, race and class create a dynamic and constantly changing level of domination and subordination within and across minority groups in organisations (Baines, 2010). Furthermore, Kimberle Crenshaw (1998) argues that intersecting gender and race is required to understand the multiplicity of women of colour experiences (Davis, 2008). However, intersectionality, as much as it has been widely celebrated by feminist and anti-racist scholarship, has been criticised for its categorical approach which consequently generates essentialism and reductionism as outcomes (McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008). Intersectionality, as Nash (2008) explains, allows scholars to pinpoint 'multiple marginalization' and 'multiple privileges', however, its collective and categorical approach can undermine the individual differences, leading to further homogenisation of minorities and marginalised individuals.

Leslie McCall (2005) argues that the categorisation based on gender, race, class and other significant differences is too simplistic for the dynamic and fluid nature of subjects and

structures resulting in further inequality among categories. For instance, in one of the few gender and ethnicity studies in an Australian context, Vasey and Manderson address the issues of ethnicity inequalities amongst Iraqi women in regional Australia in the ways in which cultural and religious differences contribute to their experiences of exclusion and marginalisation (Vasey & Manderson, 2009). Such inequality not only stems from stereotyping and reductionist assumptions, but is also triggered with common fear and misconception of the Arab and Islamic world, especially after 9/11, which is predominately and falsely spread by the media. It is apparent that refugee women in such cases are "inherently multiple, indicating not only gender and placement in a category replete with political overtones, but also a position as 'not from here', and thus able to be placed in some minority national, ethnic or cultural group" (Tomlinson, 2010, p.282). Such categorisations fuelled with 'other-phobia' and ethnocentric views deserve further understanding of the individuals' experiences dealing with discrimination, racism and prejudice in order to avoid reducing their unique involvements to a generalisable 'one fit all' classification. Thus, this research aims to provide further research as outlined by Zanoni et al. (2010) as to how individuals belonging to certain minority groups perceive and experience equality, diversity and inclusion in workplaces.

To understand the intersections of gender, race and class within organisations and its correlation with inequality, it is essential to consider the institutional power arrangement and the ways in which it shapes and shifts such intersectionality. Multinational organisations in globalised contexts are where hegemony and power structure between gender predominantly present and where gender inequality tends to constantly construct and re-construct (Acker, 1990; Tienari & Søderberg, 2005). A local highly regarded executive in one location can become a transnational 'other' in different location in a different point of time, skewing the power relations in accordance to his/her gender, race, class, religion and other identifiable characteristics. Thus in the context of globalisation, the position of privilege and agency remains subjective to mobility (the other) and sedentary (the citizen) positions of the agents and the ways in which such positions constitute a certain space of domination or subordination within globalised organisational structure (Calás, Ou, & Smircich, 2013; Knights & Willmott, 1989). Furthermore, Collinson and Hearn argue that "multiplicity and diversity are relevant not only to the analysis of masculinity, but also to the different forms and locations of workplaces" (Collinson & Hearn, 1996, p.66). Whilst men traditionally seem to claim a more supreme hegemonic position within organisations, paradoxically, white women display relatively higher power in compare to black or migrant women counterparts (Adib & Guerrier, 2003). Such complex power disparity within organisations and in particular

in relation to ethnic women must not be overlooked and must constantly be challenged and examined by scholars and professionals in order to allow discussions and discourses in bridging the gap of unequal institutional hegemony.

Whilst current research on women's careers predominantly focuses on white Anglo-Saxon women, there exists scarce literature on South Asian ethnic women in diaspora which surfaces the complexity and intricacy of transnational identities and the relationship with work and organisation. Pio (2007) investigates experiences of Indian women in New Zealand in the context of entrepreneurship. The findings illustrate that a combination of factors, including perceived discrimination, low self-esteem, feeling devalued and lack of access to/knowledge of government resources encourages women to become entrepreneurs rather than seeking employment. Additionally, in a narrative study, Esser, et al. (2010) explore the challenges faced by Muslim immigrant businesswomen in the Netherlands in dealing with exclusion and stereotyping. Discussing ethnicity, Esser, et al. (2010) argue that the structural constraints and power relations that lead to stereotypical representation hinder Muslim, immigrant businesswomen's career progression. Furthermore, cultural, national and religious differences and their own perception of acculturation, integration, adaptation and assimilation influence ethnic women's understanding of their work and organisations they work for (cf. Adib & Guerrier, 2003; Ho, 2006; Tomlinson, 2010; Vasey & Manderson, 2009). Moreover, circumstances such as migration, displacement and diaspora, when they present themselves to individuals who inherently hold different perceptions of life and career, can be expected to produce outcomes reflecting their personal and social identity constructs in various extents. Furthermore, fixed and deep-rooted differences such as gender, class, race and ethnicity which are firmly embedded in thoughts, behaviours and cultures of every individual and as prerequisites for their identity formation, demand explicit consideration, particularly when analysing the impacts of circumstances on their life and career trajectories.

In conclusion, there exists substantial research on gender and ethnicity in various fields as well as interdisciplinary domains. The vast majority of sociology (for example, Clifford, 1994; Connolly, 1991; Evetts, 1992), and migration studies (for example, Dwyer, 2000; Ehrkamp, 2005; Vertovec, 2001) have considered the interconnectedness of gender and ethnicity with the complex process of diaspora, displacement and integration through analysing identities and the ways in which these are invented and reinvented constantly and in accordance with individuals' diasporic experiences influenced by political, historical and cultural events.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

In this qualitative, exploratory research, transnational feminism challenges gender-neutral methodologies prevalent in work and organization studies, and also provides a feminist approach which reads the subject matter from the perspective of minority women's experiences. Understanding marginalised women needs an appropriate methodology such as narrative analysis to enable the expression of challenges and difficulties associated with being different. In this chapter, I will further discuss the transnational feminist approach and its relevance to this research, and explain narrative analysis as an appropriate methodology in studying Iranian-Australian women. Furthermore, I will provide present the research method, the ethics approval and its process, how data were collected, and how the analytical themes were selected for further analysis and discussion.

3.1   Transnational Feminist Approach

As established and discussed in the literature review, transnational feminism is considered as an appropriate approach to understand and explore the issues of minority women in a postcolonial context. Transnational feminism strives for disruption of supremacy and inferiority's binary links, much like intersectionality which aims to unsettle the de-racialisation of gender as well as the de-gendering of racism (Falcón & Nash, 2015). In other words, such an approach scrutinises any attempt to normalise and label being different. From the ontological and epistemological perspectives, Gavin Jack and Robert Westwood (2006) express that post-colonialism facilitates bridging the gap between theory and methods and enables researchers to radically challenge functionalist and neo-positivist ontologies of studying 'others'. Epistemologically, Jack and Westwood (2006, p. 493) also highlight that "post-colonial epistemology rejects any universalist and unitarist view of science, revealing the western orthodoxy's reliance on its specific historical, ideological and cultural locations. This opens a space for the recognition of viable alternative knowledge systems and local voices operative within their own locations, typically explored using critically-inspired ideographic methods, for example critical ethnography". With the undeniable clout of capitalism, imperialism and the "scattered hegemonies of system and structures of white supremacy" (Falcón & Nash, 2015, p.3), transnational feminism as a fitting approach enables

scholars to bring minorities' issues and their struggles to the forefront and provides them a platform to address many existing concerns associated with being part of a minority group, including discrimination, stereotyping, racism, and sexism.

Whilst transnational feminism facilitates an interdisciplinary study of complex gender/race/class relationships, some critics, nevertheless, argue the possibility of further marginalisation of women of colour, unintended homogeneity, and normalisation of minority women (Chowdhury, 2009). For instance, in attempts at a fair representation of subaltern groups, Spivak (1985) argues, there lays a danger of "essentialism that results from conflating political and esthetic forms of representation, and ensuing presumption that the oppressed subject somehow speaks, acts and knows the objective conditions that generate and maintain their oppression" (Srinivas, 2013, p.1658). Furthermore, Mohanty, in a transnational feminist study, agrees with postmodernist critiques which suggest that analyses "that entail institutional and systematic analysis of power, anchored in the experiences of subordination and resistance of the most marginalized communities of women can be essentialist and reductionist" (Mohanty, 2013, p.969). Contributing to the similar stream of thought, Fernandes, in her critical approach, challenges the institutionalisation of transnational feminism within the context of academia and the ways in which such an approach can further skew the power relations when representing others (Fernandes, 2013). Similarly, Falcón and Nash argue that institutionalisation of the theories of women of colour by US universities and under white supremacy's power structure can covertly encourage further exclusions and divisions amongst feminist scholars in working collaboratively and in solidarity (Falcón & Nash, 2015). It is necessary to recognise and acknowledge such presumptions when studying oppressed minorities and subaltern groups. However, to consider the limits of these various theoretical perspectives, it is absolutely crucial to understand and acknowledge individual (whether oppressed or oppressive) differences in reacting to certain phenomena and the extent to which they accept or resist such experiences. Given the complexities of colonial domination and white supremacy, issues associated with representation of others, and the increasing importance of transnational studies, I argue that the there is still much to obtain from these interconnected discourses. As a woman of colour who is both displaced and assimilated, and both oppressed and privileged, I intend to represent those who are othered like myself and whose voices are not heard. Although there exists a danger of silencing the 'other' voices through scholarly representation (See Spivak, 1988; Calás, 1999), voices represented by a member of the same community are far more realistic compared to those who are represented by 'white, western' scholars. Nevertheless, transnational feminism is still recognised as a valuable framework which is crucial for identifying the ever-growing

transnational women's struggles and constant battle to acquire equality and recognition within the globalised world (Mohanty,1988; Herr, 2014). Thus, in this research, as a transnational woman who shares common struggles and challenges, I intend to employ transnational feminism as an appropriate approach to further study marginalised women in the Australian context and as a tool to enable them to share their narratives and life stories.

3.2.   Narrative Analysis

"How individuals recount their histories – what they emphasize and omit, their stance as protagonists or victims, the relationship the story stablishes between teller and audience – all shape what individuals can claim of their own lives. Personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one's life; they are the means by which identities may be fashioned" (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992, p.1).

Drawing on what Rosenwald and Ochberg outlined, storytelling enables individuals to portray themselves through narrating their stories and identities which are constructed and constantly evolving according to social and historical events; and allows individuals to 'emplot' their story of self (Burck, 2005, p. 252). Imbedded in a constructivist paradigm (Table 1), storytelling and narratives – which will be interchangeably used in this research – illustrate individuals' inclination to constantly invent and re-invent themselves to make sense of their own experiences, and that their interpretations of their own experiences are continually influenced by shared events, practices, languages and other external factors and stimuli (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Schwandt, 2000). Ontologically, as Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.111) outline, "constructions are alterable, as are their associated realities", meaning that realities constructed by human intellects may change as they become more informed by constant changes of the social realities around them. For instance, a displaced individual's 'being' begins to transform throughout the processes of migration, settlement, resistance, acceptance, and assimilation. Such continual social changes influence an individual's perception of reality and alters their level of being and becoming (Linstead & Pullen, 2006). Epistemologically, narrative analysis enables researchers and participants to be more interactively linked, allowing for new nuances to emerge and develop as interviews proceed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In other words, knowledge creation is a result of constant interaction between the interviewer and interviewees. Thus, employing narrative analysis, ontologically

and epistemologically, facilitates the transnational feminist framework (the framework utilised in this research) and its application in further exploring and better understanding a displaced individual's experiences of diaspora. Furthermore, narrative analysis continues to fit the social constructivist paradigm through its hermeneutical and dialectical approach which enables a constant "reconstruction of previously held construction", providing a dynamic and fluid way of analysing events and associated experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1996, p. 112). In other words, such methodology provides an appropriate platform for disturbing the essentialist approach held by an overwhelming number of Western feminists in studying third-world women and allowing 'othered women' to reflect on their being/becoming experiences through their social, ideological and intellectual construct and re-construct (Mohanty, 1988, 1991, Narayan, 1997).

	Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology
Constructivism	Relativism – local and specific constructed realities	Transactional/subjective; created findings	Hermeneutical/dialectical

Table 1. Basic Beliefs of Constructivist Paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994)

Additionally, Reissman argues that "studying narratives is useful for what they reveal about social life – culture speaks itself through the individual's story" and therefore it allows assessing and analysing sensitive social practices such as gender inequalities, racial oppression and asymmetrical hegemony (Miller & Glassner,1997; Riessman, 1993, p.5). In studying Iranian-Australian women as a minority group, it is imperative to acknowledge their life experiences and challenges associated with historical and social events such as the revolution, war and migration, by giving them a platform to express their feelings and emotions and by enabling them to tell their own stories, and to share their own experiences of diaspora, displacement, 'otherness', resistance and assimilation. It is through the process of storytelling that individuals can share their own experiences of social issues such as racism, sexism, discrimination and inequalities. Narrative analysis, also, enables individuals whose experiences are embedded in different languages to manage their differences and present themselves in their narratives of self (Burck, 2005). Such a methodological approach appeals to transnational feminist researchers as it enables them in bringing forward and giving voice to underrepresented communities and addressing their issues, challenges, and frustrations in dealing with inconspicuous discrimination, prejudice and other unfair practices.

Whilst the research participants in a narrative analysis approach are given a space to express and reflect in their own ways, the issue of researchers' control and power within the context of research writing and representation cannot be overlooked. Liz Stanley describes feminist research as "conventionally seen as a presumptively one-to-one depiction and analysis of some aspects of social life" with some representational challenges (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1996, p.43). The issue of misrepresentation of women and the inherent problems associated with unfair positioning of the researched is a common academic discussion particularly, in the cases of men studying women or white women studying women of colour (Hurd & McIntyre, 1996). The power and control held by the researchers and their autonomy in analysing, interpreting and producing the research materials constantly appear in academic writings, whether they take a gender-neutral side or consider differences (Acker, 1990; Lazerg, 1988). In other words, their privilege of holding some level of authority can, to some extent, encourage manipulation and self-interpretation of the obtained data. However, I argue that the representation of others by academics who share similar attributes whether culture, gender, or race can minimise the danger of misrepresentation to some extent. Sharing similar attributes with the participants, whether speaking the same language or sharing the same diasporic experiences, generates a level of trust and solidarity between both parties; consequently, more stories will be shared and more nuances will be unravelled. Furthermore, Pullen (2006, p.278) argues that "research is itself a social practice in which researchers not only perform the customary research functions by constructing the field and representation the other, gathering, questioning and interrogating data, but also produce and reproduce the researcher – as self, as identity, as authorial voice and even as research subject". Pullen also encourages reflexivity in research which entails "questioning how rewriting the self- rewriting the feminine – involves challenging authoritative frameworks which supress difference and multiplicity and encourage writing multiplicity" (Pullen, 2006, p. 280). There is also emphasis on the level of authors' own representation in their qualitative writing and its impact on increasing the quality and trustworthiness of qualitative accounts (Smith, 2006). Being involved in producing their own sense of reality, individuals – whether researchers or researched – interpret their own experiences through accounting for their own cultural disposition, differences in individual interpretation and ideological expectations (Rhodes & Wray-Bliss, 2011). Thus, in this transnational feminist study, the researcher is as much present as the researched participants. Whilst it is imperative for writers to take responsibility for the power and privilege they possess while writing reflexively, it is necessary to take "seriously the lives of others, recognizing that they are multi-dimensional and culturally complex, and produce accounts of them that have depth, detail, emotionality, nuance, and coherence" (Rhodes &

Brown, 2005, p.484). Therefore, in this research and through semi-structured interviews, the participants – Iranian-Australian women – are given a platform to tell their narratives in their own way and share with an interviewer who is part of the same community. In addition, there are shared experiences and memories as well as shared struggles and challenges associated with certain historical and political events, for instance, the memories and tales of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the Iran-Iraq war. In other words, Iranians generally have shared some similar experiences of loss, regret, uncertainty and insecurity associated with the revolution and the war. Given some shared experiences, I am as much part of this research as the participants and I am as close to their stories as they are to mine. In this research and through the transnational feminist approach – as an othered researcher – I am providing a platform to not only recite narratives of others and share their stories of diaspora and assimilation, but also to reflect on my shared experiences and challenges as an Iranian woman living and working in a multicultural yet Anglo-Celtic dominated country.

3.3.   Research Method

Semi-structured interactive interviews based on questions of diaspora surfaced through the literature review attempt to enable individual others to narrate their stories of diaspora. Conducting interviews in an interactive conversation mode allows for a rich, illuminating and generative experience and presents interviewees an opportunity to disrupt the monotony and routine. Interactive interviews are ways to challenge dominant research practices which entrenches the binary between researcher and researched, and allows for converting in-depth interviews into actual dialogues which can disrupt the one-way nature of interviews, and so having a free flow of ideas undercutting the dynamics of the researcher guiding the interview (Falcón, 2016). Being transparent and forthright about the research objectives and plans for dissemination and publications involves the community members who are part of the research process. Therefore, in attempts to conduct a more coherent and transparent conversation, in this empirical research, semi-structured interviews are utilised. However, prior to conducting interviews, the ethical clearance had to be acquired approving that this project complies with the Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. Whilst this process usually takes a few weeks on average, the application for this research had to go to the central committee and took more than eight weeks until approved. It is believed that studying immigrant women from a particular background, i.e. Muslim, is considered as a sensitive case and it requires the central committee's decision and approval for conducting such research. In

my opinion, such sensitivity reinforces the importance and significance of research and further study of minority groups who are constantly marginalised.

Ten Iranian-Australian women who migrated to Australia in the 1980s and the 1990s were recruited from the Iranian-Australian community via telephone and email. In addition, a snowball method was also used to recruit more participants who fit the criteria. The recruited participants were Iranian-Australian women between the age of $21 - 70$ and currently working. Additionally, they migrated to Australia between 1980 and 2000. I intentionally recruited equal numbers of first generation and second generation women to capture two different generations' experiences and perception of diaspora, displacement, assimilation and multiculturalism. It is important to study both first and second generation Iranian- Australian for two main reasons. First, these two generations have one important distinction, which is their age. First generation women are old enough to remember the Islamic revolution, the Iran-Iraq war and their memories of migration, whereas the second-generation women have limited or no memories of Iran and its historical events before moving to Australia; therefore, their life stories and narratives of diaspora entail different shades and colours. Second, methodologically, there has been no research which studied both first and second generation Iranian-Australian women and their diasporic experiences.

The identity of the participants remains anonymous and pseudonyms are used throughout the research to protect their confidentiality. To understand individuals' experience of migration and settlement and memories associated with it, interview questions (see Appendix 1.) were designed to allow the participants to express and articulate themselves and their experiences freely and naturally. The interviews were conducted in both English and Farsi (Native Iranian language) to allow for multilingualism (Falcón, 2016) and to facilitate a better understanding of specific terms and expressions. The participants were given the option to speak the language they felt more comfortable with, to enable them to communicate easier and express their feelings and emotions better. Interestingly, first generation women preferred to speak Farsi, whereas second generation women preferred English as language to answer the interview questions. Interviews were audio-recorded, translated (when necessary) and transcribed for further analysis. Speaking both Farsi and English enabled me as a researcher to understand and analyse the audio-recordings without misinterpretation.

	Participant	Year of Migration	Age	Marital Status	Qualification		Current Occupation	Main Motivation of migration
					Iran	Australia (or other countries)		
1	Farah	1985	67	Married	Education degree	TAFE certificate optical dispensing/childcare/welfare	Optical dispenser	Religion (Baha'i)
2	Mona	1985	54	Married	None	Marketing degree	Office clerk	Religion (Baha'i)
3	Negar	1981	68	Divorced	None	None (Engineering degree and Master of Education from England)	University Lecturer	Religion (Baha'i)
4	Nasim	1984	40	Married	None	Arts degree/Master of education	Teacher and artist	Iran-Iraq war (migrated with parents)
5	Banoo	1996	28	Married	None	Marketing degree	Marketing Manager	Better future (migrated with parents)
6	Leila	1996	51	Married	Degree of commerce	TAFE certificate of accounting and childcare	Book keeper	Better future for children
7	Soheila	1997	46	Married	Nursing degree	Nursing degree and master of genetics	Nurse, artist and activist	Education and better future
8	Nastaran	1998	30	Single	None	Law degree	Lawyer	Better future (migrated with parents)
9	Anita	1995	26	Single	None	Accounting degree	Accountant	Better future (migrated with parents)
10	Melika	1989	32	Married	None	Business degree	Property market analyst	Father's education (migrated with parents)

Table 2: List of participants and characteristics

Table 2 contains some details about the research participants. Some of these women are within my circle of friends and acquaintances, and some of them were referred to me by the Iranian-Australian community. Diagram 1 is designed to display a chronological timeframe of their arrival to Australia.

1980   2000

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 & Iran-Iraq War of 1980   Diaspora

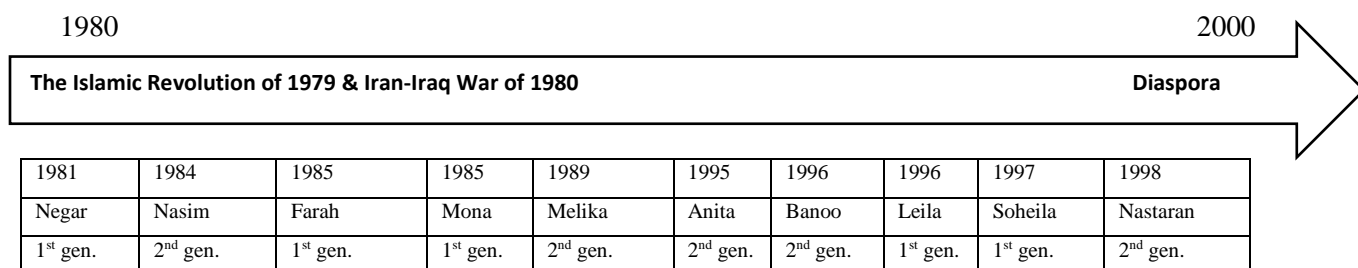| 1981	1984	1985	1985	1989	1995	1996	1996	1997	1998
Negar	Nasim	Farah	Mona	Melika	Anita	Banoo	Leila	Soheila	Nastaran
1st gen.	2nd gen.	1st gen.	1st gen.	2nd gen.	2nd gen.	2nd gen.	1st gen.	1st gen.	2nd gen.

Diagram 1: Participants' chronological list

Interviewing in story telling style allows for new nuances to naturally emerge and certain themes to occur (McAdams, 1997). Once the interviews were conducted and transcripts were generated, I read and reviewed the interview contents several times in order to spot the common and reoccurring themes. By making a selection of relevant extracts and phrases, I then developed a set of themes and insights such as experiences of separation and dislocation, transitional identities, belonging, resistance, power, discrimination and work challenges. "Research is an encounter between researchers and researched who have similar and dissimilar identities, agendas and authority" (Essers & Tedmanson, 2014, p. 357). As an Iranian-Australian researcher I am part of the same community as the researched and as such the representation of minorities by minorities is essential for furthering transnational feminist research in work and organization studies and allows for a more authentic and genuine reflection of marginalisation and discrimination (Narayan, 2008). The following data analysis is the result of my analysis of the interview contents and identification of common themes.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

This chapter illustrates extracts of the narratives of ten first and second generation Iranian-Australian women. These extracts aim to reveal some of the complexity of their diasporic identities constructed by political, historical and cultural events and the ways in which these events impact individuals' experiences of displacement and migration. It also reflects on both generations of Iranian-Australian women's experiences of negotiating their differences in order to assimilate and belong. Furthermore, it exposes their challenges and difficulties in dealing with gendered and racialised discrimination in their workplaces. Therefore, these extracts focus on four main themes:

- Displaced women: sharing narratives of separation and dislocation
- Displacement, transnationality and identity crisis: who am I?
- Difference and discrimination
- Transnational women: gendered and racialised work challenges

Supported by the relevant and recent literature, these themes and concepts are discussed and conceptualised throughout the thesis. In this chapter, my intention is to enable Iranian-Australian women to share their experiences of living and working in Australia and the challenges they have faced. My aim is to produce knowledge based on the narratives and stories told by the minority women in this research and to enable readers to make their own interpretation and analysis in relation to the theories and concepts discussed throughout the thesis (cf. Essers et al., 2010).

4.1. Displaced Women: Sharing Narratives of Separation and Dislocation

As discussed earlier in this thesis, the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the Iran-Iraq war of 1980 appear as two major shared events which significantly changed the course of Iranian people's lives, including the women in this research. The consequences of these events had profound impacts on the vast majority of the Iranian population, especially those who belonged to minority groups, specifically women. For instance, Farah, a 67-year-old Iranian woman, who migrated to Australia 31 years ago with her husband and two children and who practices the Baha'i faith had to leave Iran because of the fear of persecution and prison as the

Islamic state took a firm stand against anything non-Islamic and announced it as heretical. Consequently, anyone who publicly and openly practiced and promoted certain religions and ideologies could risk their own lives and anyone who they were associated with. Even if they remained and decided to abide by Islamic rules, they had no chance of being accepted to universities in Iran and therefore acquiring qualifications, or even of being recruited by the government in a permanent position, unless they converted to Islam. The Baha'i community was not impervious and a mass migration of the Baha'i population began after the inception of the Islamic state in Iran. When I asked Farah why they migrated to Australia, she explained:

> … because we are Baha'i. They fired me from work because of that. They called me a heretic and for that reason I wasn't fit to do my work which was teaching young students. We had young children and we knew it will be difficult for them to enter university there and their future is not clear. Back then they [Iranian government] hadn't changed the education polices yet. Today Baha'i is not allowed to go to universities in Iran. Now looking back, we made the best decision. That was the main reason! … We had no choice. We fled through the Iran-Pakistan border on foot and with a couple of camels. It was a long journey. It took us two days and night until we arrived in Pakistan.

Being accused of heresy and not being fit for work, Farah found herself an outsider in her own country where she was born and raised. Not only did she have to deal with such accusation, she was also worried about her children's future. This was important enough for her to take on a long and dangerous journey across borders with her family and to search for a safe place for her children to live. These circumstances made her a more resilient person and compelled her to develop strength and determination to go through such difficult times. Interestingly though, she talked about it with such a pride and enjoyment when she stated:

> I was very happy. It felt as I escaped from the cage and I felt free. I could do anything, study anything, work anywhere. No one will stop me. The first thing we felt was freedom. We understood for real what freedom means! Our first joy was our freedom. We were young and we could do anything to improve our lives.

Free from the restrictions imposed by the Islamic state of Iran, living in Australia allowed Farah and her family to experience equality and secular ways of living where they could practice their religion without fear of persecution and jail. Such significant transition associated with engagement with the historical and political events happening in her home country on one hand, and migration and displacement on the other not only changed the way

she is treated as a Baha'i woman, but also the way she has developed her transnational, hybrid identity.

On the contrary, Leila's experience – another participant who also came to Australia with her husband and two children about 20 years ago – exhibited different outcomes. For Leila – an educated woman in her fifties who has experienced life before and after revolution, the Islamic revolution and the Sharia-inspired constitutional changes were a good enough reason to leave everything behind in pursuit of a better future for her children. Being worried and concerned about their children's future in Iran emerged from the conversations of most of first generation participants in this research. Whilst they shared narratives of their own struggles, putting their children and their future first was what they, almost all, agreed on.

Those who did not have children when they left Iran encountered some other issues which reveal the repercussion of the revolution and injudicious and imprudent constitutional changes. For instance, Soheila who migrated to Australia as a nurse in the late 90s, explained her reason for leaving Iran as not receiving equal opportunity in education and the field of study which she was keen to get into:

> I always wanted to study genetics in Iran, but when I went to select this, I couldn't, because they were only accepting male candidates… they had no allocation for girls. So then I chose nursing. I knew I can use nursing as a profession to leave Iran. After graduation I applied to come to Australia. It took two and a half years until they granted me a visa.

For Soheila, a registered nurse in her forties who is also a human rights activist, it was unfair and insufferable that she could not enter the field which she was so passionate about and desperately wanted to get into. Such gender inequality did not exist before the revolution and women were in fact encouraged to partake in intellectual, social and political activities nationally and internationally. But what is interesting in Soheila's case is that she did not surrender and instead strategically chose a profession which ultimately helped her to leave Iran. Not only did she suffer gender inequality in education, like other Iranian women she had to wear hijab; another compulsory rule imposed only on women. Coming from a freethinking and secular family and not believing in such a ludicrous and discriminative law, she became more adamant to find a way to free herself from such restraints and that was to leave Iran for good. Soheila's situation, which is not unique, compelled her to develop qualities such as resilience and perseverance and to focus on the bigger picture. But it did not end there, even after arriving in Australia. After constantly confronting hindrances in her home country, Soheila had to continue facing challenges in Australia, though different, as she stated:

> … when I came to Australia, they didn't accept my qualification … so I had to go
> back to university. I have two nursing degrees now; one from Iran and one from here.
> It wasn't difficult at first. Most of my problems began in the second and third year.
> everything is new and interesting at first specially coming from a country of
> restrictions. Problems started in the second year, homesickness. The issues with
> Iranian community and also with Australian community. When you begin to know and
> become familiar, the problems emerge.

Her tenacity and perseverance which took shape in Iran, remained intact. Although escaping from an authoritarian country and settling in a democratic country such as Australia was Soheila's first and most important goal at the beginning, her constant confrontation with racism and discrimination especially in her workplaces made her regret her decision. However, in situations where there is no home to go back to, diasporic individuals, including Soheila, have to endure both being homeless – not having a home to go back to – and being excluded – not being completely accepted in the host country. Later on in this chapter, I will return to Soheila's narratives of discrimination and inequality at work.

Interestingly, the second generation participants, when explaining their reasons for migrating to Australia, recited their stories from their parents' points of view, which were to find a better place for their children's future, a better quality of life, better education and more opportunities. Being quite young when they left Iran, they could not remember how they moved to Australia or recall why they made such a massive transition, so their stories were essentially what their parents told them and what they have made of shared memories and their own understanding of the situation when they got older. Banoo, a second generation women in her late twenties, was only six years old when she left Iran alongside her parents and her older sister. Her fuzzy memories were the only mental resources she could rely on. In fact, Banoo admitted that she never thought about it before, because there is nothing to remember.

> ….my parents enrolled me in a primary school [in Iran] but by the time it was time to
> go to school, we left Iran… I don't remember much because I was so young. We used
> to leave in a small city in north of Iran and I thought we were going to the capital city.
> When we got here I thought we are here for a holiday and I didn't understand what
> was going on at the time.

Another second generation participant, Nasim, a forty-year-old teacher who was also very young when she left Iran, explained how she made sense of her vague memories of migration through art:

I was four and a half [when we left Iran]. I remember bits and pieces. I did one project about that actually when I was in my first year of uni. It was called 'landscape of memory' trying to go back in time and remember some of those early [memories], because I had lots of flashes, houses and family, I did a floorplan of our house and showed it to my mum and she said yes that is what our house looked like.

Nasim is an artist and most of her art projects are known for her emphasis on memories of migration and diaspora. Whilst her memories are not as vivid, her interpretations of those memories in her art are rich and powerful and have been capturing many Australians and non-Australians' attention. Nasim, unlike the other second generation participants, uses art as a platform to restore and embrace her memories of a home country which has partially constructed her identity.

Another commonly experienced issue associated with migration and displacement raised by the participants was their inability to speak English which consequently made them struggle in communicating with other non-Iranian people in Australia. The next few excerpts are chosen to echo their voices which demonstrate their own ways of experiencing such an issue. For instance, Farah explained:

Our first problem was the language. Our English wasn't that good. I couldn't answer the phone. I understand that the language is the main problem for everyone who migrate to any country for the first time.

Farah's inability to speak the language restrained her from conducting basic ways of communication with others such as answering the phone. For Anita, a 26-year-old accountant who was only five years old when she came to Australia with her mother, not being able to communicate with other students forced her to create her own way of interacting with people around her:

Because I couldn't speak English, I made up my own language at school as a little kid until I could actually communicate with them in English.

Anita's need to fit in as an absolute necessity encouraged her to deal with such an issue herself. As a young child, her survival skills manifested in her ability to create a language – combination of words, body language and facial expression – in order to develop a sense of belonging and to become accepted. Banoo reflected on her own experience as an immigrant child in Australian schools and how she found herself excluded and isolated simply because of her inability to communicate. Additionally, these young immigrants were not only exposed

to the experiences of exclusion and rejection, they also had to confront bullying, as Nastaran, a thirty years old lawyer, shared:

> In the first few years I was exposed to a lot of bullying because of my inability to speak English and the accent as well, and inability to interact with people. I don't have any fun memories from high school here.

What these young girls had to endure which has partially shaped their identities will be discussed later on in this chapter. Fed up with repressive and primitive laws since the Islamic revolution, the women of this research departed their home country to escape to an egalitarian country which values their citizens and their rights. Whilst their escape has freed them from the discriminative and unequal women's rights in Iran, it has produced other issues which only women of colour can understand. Being different, looking different, speaking different, and having a different culture not only made them feel displaced and excluded, it also compelled them to define themselves differently in accordance to their own circumstances and situations in attempts to belong.

4.2. Displacement, Transnationality and Identity Crisis: Who am I?

The women in this study come from different backgrounds, religion, education and class; and their experiences of living and working Australia vary. The ways in which their identities have shaped and the extent to which they continue reinventing themselves in response to their diasporic experiences and involvements have influenced their perception of their own identity and sense of belonging. They expressed the complexity of defining their identity, however, their attempts to situate themselves within the context of transnationality enabled them to manage their uprootedness and displacement issues. Farah, in response to the question of belonging, stated:

> When you live somewhere long enough, you accept [new] things easier. You learn the norms and standards of Australia. It is easier to accept and it becomes easier to live. It becomes your second nature. But when you are by yourself or with your own community you still follow your own traditions and customs, those which are very important to you and to Iranian culture, otherwise you will have problem there too. It is impossible to change and adapt 100%. But we can without prejudice accept and try and do what we can, so living here become much easier for ourselves and people who know us.

Knowing Farah from my previous interactions with her in the Iranian community, after thirty years living and working in Australia she still values and performs many Iranian traditions and customs and her connection with her past and her heritage continues to grow through her interaction with the Iranian community. Whilst her approach to restore and embrace her culture and heritage maintains her connectedness with Iranian people and culture, she has not isolated herself from the space which she is now calling home. Her engagement and interaction with her non-Iranian neighbours and colleagues, as I have witnessed, has enabled her to bridge the gap between cultural and social differences, between locals and outsiders, and between national and transnational. Her statement, although it may reflect a sense of obligation to sustain her connections with both the Iranian community and the Australian one, shows she has found herself very satisfied and content with the ways in which she negotiates and makes sense of her own identity within the multifaceted transnational domains.

Second generation participants in this research demonstrated a different approach in dealing with their multiple and complex identities and the ways in which they have managed to negotiate their Iranian-ness and Australian-ness. For instance, Nasim, a primary school teacher and artist, stated how being one identity and becoming another can intersect and overlap through embracing both cultures and welcoming the differences and similarities:

> … On my personal level it wasn't hard to negotiate because I didn't have to pick between them. Being Iranian and being Australian wasn't two separate things, my Iranian-ness were adding to being Australian, and I guess it is because I had a family here and we were very close and we always hung out. And they are all grown up in Australia and we weren't very 'Irooni' in a way that they thought because we were all grown up here … so we liked the celebration of 'Nowruz' and liked our culture. If I had never left Iran, I wouldn't have been the person that I am today, and the way I define myself is a human being who have different experiences and languages. I am not ashamed to say I am Iranian or not ashamed to say Australian.

Having access to family support and being able to communicate shared values and cultures with family members and relatives allowed Nasim to connect with both cultures and construct a type of hybrid identity which enabled her to consolidate her cultural ambiguity and uncertainty. Whilst, not calling herself 'very Irooni' – as not being completely immersed in Iranian culture –, she expressed how she enjoys celebrating Iranian cultural events such as 'Nowrus'– the traditional Iranian festival of spring; therefore, she stays connected with her roots and heritage. Her experience of being called 'khareji' – outsider – by her relatives in Iran when she visited there a few years ago, and not being considered 'Aussie' in Australia

because she does not have the appearance of a white Australian, made her confused and displeased with herself when she was younger; however, as she became older, her maturity and wisdom allowed her to better understand and accept herself and her complex identity. Similarly, Melika, a property analyst in her early thirties, reflected on her experiences of difficulties trying to make sense of her own identity in different stages of her life as:

> I am not a complete Iranian and not a complete Aussie. I am more a 50-50. Now that I am married to an Iranian I think I am more Iranian than an Australian. But it was different growing up. I never wanted to associate myself with Iranian things because I wasn't interested in it, I wasn't interested in Iranian music, I wasn't interested in anything Iranian. But the older you get, the more you want to go back to your ethnicity, your culture, study more about it, know more about it. If you asked me this question 10 years ago I would have said I am more Australian than Iranian. I think I am a mix now, more towards Iranian.

A common experience of all the second generation women in this study is the realisation of how their connectedness and closeness to their nationality and culture extended and flourished as they became older. As young immigrants, they had to negotiate their differences i.e. appearance, language, accent, and culture at school, while navigating through their Iranian culture and values at home. They had to constantly move across two different terrains and to constantly create and re-recreate themselves in order to be accepted and included. Their family values and principles which contradicted Australian culture and norms presented complications and embarrassment for these young women. Banoo's narrative represents such a concern:

> When I started to see difference significantly at home and school was when I started to become 10 to 12 approaching the teenage years and it was then when I saw a massive difference. My parents wanted to raise us as traditional Iranian girls. They were very strict to us. my dad didn't want us to wear makeup, didn't want us to wear clothes that they were revealing. I wasn't allowed to go to the parties. Even I remember when I was in year 7 when we had a camp. I was the only kid who didn't go to the camp so they had to put a substitute teacher for me. Because my dad couldn't accept the fact that boys and girls in that age going to the camp are mixed and sleep in the same hotel.

Such encounters and conflicts are largely associated with cultural values, in particular those that are revered by Iranian parents who strongly believe that such values promote purity, chastity, respect and virtue and should be embraced and respected by their children. Banoo's mother, Leila, who is one the participants of this research, addressed this issue when she

outlined that her duty as a mother was to insure her daughters were taught Iranian values and customs, as this was stressed by her husband.

> When they [my daughters] came back from school, so there were two teenagers and here we live in a different environment and culture to Iran. My husband is very traditional and still holds on to Iranian values and norms. He was worried about the girls and insisting to raise them with Iranian culture which is very different to Australian culture. So I had to spend hours after school to work with my daughters ….

Traditionally, girls are subject to obey the tradition of chastity (*pakdamani*) and maintain their purity (virginity) until their marriage consummation and this had a broad application amongst traditional Iranians even before the Islamic revolution. Therefore, Iranian parents carry this great responsibility so long as their daughters are single. Not only it is difficult for parents to apply such tradition outside of their country, it is even much harder for these young girls to comprehend its meaning and implications in an Australian context. This topic itself is another thesis and it is beyond the scope of this research. But, outlining such restraining tradition and its implication on young Iranian women highlights the magnitude and the extent of such traditions on their identity and interactions with others. In addition, and in support of her earlier comment, Banoo continued:

> … I always do consider myself a hybrid [Iranian-Australian], I am always aware of my background and I am actually quite Persian as well in terms of values and being family-oriented and take those values dear to me. But I guess the good thing about leaving in a western culture and having different backgrounds because you learn to 'pick and choose' different values that you like. But I think 70 to 80 percent of my values and ideologies is Australian actually. Although I am married to someone with a same background as me, the only reason we get along is because he is quite Australian himself.

Not completely disassociating herself from her Iranian-ness, Banoo picked and chose those values which enabled her to form a hybrid identity through which she retains her Iranian-ness while embraces being an Australian. Other participants, such as Nastaran who is a lawyer, are more inclined to consider themselves Iranian and to distance themselves from being defined as an Australian:

> If people ask me, I would tell them I am Iranian. I never consider myself an Australian and I never will. Last year when I went to Europe for work, when people asked me where I am from, I would automatically tell them I am Iranian. It was never that I am Australian. Then I would tell them 'oh well and I also live in Australia for last 20

years or so'. Because I don't think I am Aussie. I never had the sense of belonging here. And the older I got, the more I was drawn back to my own community. Especially in the last five years all of my friends are exclusively Iranian.

Impacted by her childhood memories and experiences of exclusion and marginalisation, Nastaran has constructed an identity which has led her to encompass her Iranian values more than Australian ones. Although the narratives of Iranian women in this research suggest that diasporic experiences and individual reactions vary due to personal, social and historical circumstances, and consequently the magnitude of impacts can be very different from individual to individual, the fact is that every one of them have encountered some form of racial discrimination, marginalisation and gendered/racialised inequalities while living and working in Australia.

4.3.   Difference and Discrimination

The Iranian-Australian women in this research, regardless of their age, have all experienced some level of discrimination during their life in Australia, but it seems to have had a lesser impact on some than others. It was not just being women which categorised them as different, but their ethnic background, their language and accent, their names and even what they wore also made them vulnerable to stereotyping and prejudice. Such complexity not only provoked multiple discrimination and intolerance towards these women, it also compelled them to display certain characteristics and qualities to either fight back through resistance or surrender through adaptation. In exploring the embodied intersection of gender, ethnicity and nationality and the ways in which transnational identities of Iranian-Australian women are performed and produced in response to external discourses, the following section will highlight some of the challenges that these women have faced, the strategies that they have employed to negotiate their transnational identities and manage inequality and discrimination, and the extent to which their lives have been affected by their constant interaction and negotiation with their own 'othered' society and society of 'others'.

As a young Iranian girl who began school not long after her arrival, Melika's memories are more reflective of others' reactions to her different and 'weird' name and accent, however her sister's stories which are told by Melika reveal a different level of harassment and discrimination, as she explained:

… they always make fun of you. You have a weird name or a weird surname. My sister experienced that more than me because she had to wear scarf even though she didn't want to, same as my mum. Because my dad had a scholarship from an Islamic country [Iran], so my older sister and my mum were obliged to cover their head. So my sister suffered a lot. She was getting bullied [at school], that she wears handkerchief on her head or she is a 'towel head', they always make fun of your accent and everything.

In Melika's case, her conflict with part of her habitus – her name in this instance – indicates how an embodied characteristic can appear normal in one context and abnormal and 'weird' in another. Her name, appearance and identity would never be considered different if she was living in Iran, but in a predominantly white Anglo-Saxon country, she is a 'girl from outside'. Not being old enough to be forced to wear compulsory hijab positioned Melika in a less vulnerable position than her older sister. Here, it was not only her sister's foreign name and accent that categorised her as being different, but was is also her appearance that immediately put her under the spotlight of being different; a girl who wears a towel on her head. The unfair and discriminative pressure on Melika's sister and her mother from the Iranian government from a distance epitomises the power inequality that only impacts women. If not abiding by the rules, Melika's father's position and his access to the Iranian government's scholarship scheme could have been jeopardised and could have resulted in termination of the funding and deportation; this was the pressure which was only imposed on women of Melika's family and not on her father.

Banoo's experience of managing differences reinforces the powerful impacts and bitter consequences of looking different in an Australian school context:

... At lunch time or recess, there were Australian kids and that is when I felt I don't really fit in. I went to a public school which they didn't have uniforms so you could wear whatever you wanted to. The way I dressed or even for lunch my mum used to give me like Iranian bread and sandwiches which were different to the 'fairy floss' Australian bread that other kids were eating. Even the haircut I had very different to the other kids. Unfortunately, on that level of ages, kids don't have that level of maturity. When someone is different, for them different is equal to bad, the unknown is something bad.

As a young child, Banoo could see *how* she was different from others but could not comprehend *why*. Although she had no obligation to wear hijab, neither by her parents nor by the Iranian government as in Melika's sister case, others still perceived her as an outsider and

someone who does not belong. Retrospectively, she associated children's reactions with a lack of maturity and a misperception towards those who looked different. What is also evident from Banoo's statement, is her own realisation of being and looking different. It is not only how her external environment perceived her, but also how she identified herself as someone who looked different in comparison to other students. Her observation of self and her identity made her realise that her appearance is one of the attributes in which her identity has formed and is perceived. Despite her bitter childhood memories and experiences of being different, Banoo also noticed that acceptance and recognition of other cultures were more celebrated then than today:

> I think Australian society has changed a lot compare to when I came to Australia. Back then we had a 'multicultural day' or 'international day' when we actually celebrated multiculturalism, there are more immigrants and more refugees here in Australia now than before and I think maybe that is why Australia has become less accepting being multicultural. Back then there were happier to welcome us to their community whereas now when they see a foreigner they think that they are going to steal their jobs or take the Centrelink money or do a terrorist attack, their views are more negative about multiculturalism now.

Referring to multicultural and international day, Banoo emphasises the power of government policies in supporting minorities and celebrating differences. Beginning from the 1970s, multiculturalism was acknowledged and cherished as a result of introducing and implementing multiculturalism as a social policy which encouraged migrants to maintain their cultures, and to protect their languages and heritages from deterioration within mainstream institutions. Banoo's understanding of the past and current migrants' situations portrays the importance of policies such as multiculturalism and how they promote cultural acceptance and diversity. Similarly, Nasim who also went to school around the same time as Banoo, expressed her frustration with politics and media and the ways in which multiculturalism was steered towards anti-multiculturalism and racism:

> If I was growing up now, I would have more crisis than when I grew up. Because you know politics filter in every system of your life and the media and the way things are framed. You know this idea of or this stupid statement that 'the refugees are illiterate and their put strain on our economy'. What a load of rubbish! You know these people speak more languages than you do. And it is spun so much that even people who aren't into politics start to become political about these issues.

In this account, what Nasim refers to is the statement made by Peter Dutton, minister for Immigration and Border Protection since 2014, in justifying why they must stop the boats and stop allowing more refugees to enter Australia. Although statistics provided by ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) support his remarks, most minorities, including Nasim, do not believe that is entirely true. Given the recent involvements of media in broadcasting and concentrating on hot topics such as the refugee crisis, terrorism and Islamophobia, Nasim's reflection on the impact of politics on media and the ways in which they propagate news is evident in today's political and social environments nationally and internationally. Reflecting on her childhood memories and the exposure to harassments and discrimination, Nasim added:

> ... [My school] was very diverse and I actually haven't had any feeling that I have been bullied or even did people tease me, I didn't care. It could not have affected me and didn't bother me, you know. We used to call them 'skip' group. You know the 'Skippy kangaroo'. They were such a minority compare to us 'wogs' over here and 'FOBs' [fresh of the boats] over there, you know. It is going on in Western Sydney.

Nasim's experience of not feeling of being 'othered' in her school highlights her perception of how her transnational identity was accepted and how her efforts in negotiating and articulating her identity were minimal. The diverse environment of her school enabled her to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness. However, the diversity that Nasim described takes a different meaning when she outlines that 'skips' were the minority in her school. Being surrounded by students who shared the same experiences and values empowered her to resist being harassed or bullied. Her statement, however, is not so convincing as to whether she actually has experienced any bulling when she said she did not care and it could not have affected her. Her following statement also displays her resistance to bullying and discrimination:

> I remember of my first day of high school, I got on the bus and I sat at the back. It was a big deal. Only the cool kids and older kids sit at the back but I did sit at the back. But it was this one boy who even wasn't at school, he dropped out and he was really, like, mean to me, very rude and swearing and being very racist and wanted me to not sit at the back. But I didn't move. I said: 'I am sitting here; it is a free country'. And the next day I sat there. By the third day he left me alone. By the fourth day he wasn't even on the bus. Because people saw that that I am not intimidated so I never was.

In facing discriminative and bullying behaviours, Nasim demonstrated resistance and toughness and how not to let such behaviours intimidate her even from a young age. Her

identity began to shape her reflections of her experiences of external circumstances and the ways in which she reacted to cultural and social situations. Being different in Nasim's case, unlike the other second generation participants, encouraged her to develop strength and resilience; being different empowered her to acquire power, control and authority over her own life and to not allow the perceptions of others have any negative impacts on her and her life. Nasim learnt how to negotiate and articulate her identity and to embrace her own differences without disconnecting herself from the environment which she was living and breathing in. Nasim also called herself 'Switzerland' because she learnt to develop negotiating skills and to have friends in any groups in her school so she always had an advantage of being part of all groups and not isolated to one. Developing such valuable skills enabled her to navigate her transnational identity in various stages of her life and determined who she was and who she became.

Belonging to a minority community i.e. being Iranian can instigate false assumptions that are publicly shared and believed as true by some individuals; for instance, being Iranian is associated with being Muslim. Soheila expressed her experience of being a victim of such presumptions:

> … I see an anti-Iranian attitude. Here they don't even ask you and they assume you are Muslim. I have experienced that so many times. I am in a party and having a drink then someone comes and says 'can you drink?' And I say 'yes why not?' Then they say 'aren't you Muslim?' And I say 'you haven't even asked me? How do you know? I am maybe an atheist'. How can you make an assumption like that?

Although Iran is now called the 'Islamic Republic of Iran' and known as an Islamic country since the Revolution, it does not mean that the whole population is Muslim. Iran is a heterogeneous country and even after the revolution different religious and ethnic minorities exist, though they most likely hide it from the Islamic state and the general public. Whilst in most cases such assumptions are perhaps made to initiate a conversation, as can be said in Soheila's case, it is hard to dismiss their potentially destructive impacts on minorities who are vulnerable and exposed to stereotyping and reductionist views. Soheila's experience shows how minorities are exposed to situations where their identities are labelled and compartmentalised by the general public and their points of view. Being a minority woman negotiating her own identity within a transnational context, Soheila has to also bear the burden of being normalised and put into a category which she does not belong. Similarly, Mona, an office clerk in her mid-fifties, shared an experience which illustrates how she was subtly mocked for being different:

… I don't know maybe mistakenly or unmistakeably always have that feeling that you have been discriminated. It may be unintentional but when they pronounce your name wrong and then make the funny joke about it. This is discrimination. The fact that I don't drink alcohol and my manager calls me 'fun time'. Because I don't drink so I can't have fun time. I don't appreciate that. It is subtle. Definitely there is.

The culture of a 'drink after work' is cherished and celebrated in Australian culture and some minorities including some Iranians also have adopted such a culture in order to socialise with non-Iranians and familiarise themselves with the Australian norms and customs. However, it does not apply to all minorities, especially the older Iranian generation. Additionally, devoted Muslims and Baha'is do not drink alcoholic beverages. Mona, as a member of Baha'i community, whilst she considers her manager's unpleasant behaviour as subtle and perhaps unintentional, her experience of being mocked for not drinking and being called names has stayed with her and has manifested as a form of subtle discrimination. Whether such behaviour stems from managers' power hierarchy and agency in disempowering their gendered and racialised employees, or just an innocent misunderstanding, nevertheless has produced a sense of exclusion and separation for Mona within her work environment. Equally, Soheila shared her experience of racism and discrimination:

I believe there is a hidden racism in Australia. Sometimes not even hidden. But they don't want you to say anything. They don't want you to complain. They want you to accept it. Discrimination is very strong here. But nobody complains. Even if I am telling you because I know you won't mention my name. It is too much of a headache to complain. At work once I made a complaint about a colleague who was bullying me at work but it was such a difficult experience that now if even someone beats me at work I won't report.

Hidden racism and subtle discrimination were mentioned regularly by the participants when describing their experiences of living and working in Australia. However, the scope of such experiences varies from individual to individual. Sohelia's encounter with racism and discrimination underlines her concern with democracy and freedom of speech. The fear and trepidation which stem from the ways she has been treated, has petrified her to the extent to which she only talks about it in a safe environment. Such discriminatory acts are not only limited to these women's day to day living interactions with society, they also surface predominantly in their workplaces as they have stated in their narratives. The next section will expand on such experiences.

4.4. Transnational Women: Gendered and Racialised Work Challenges

The women in this study had to made the difficult choice of leaving their home country for pursuit of a better life, and constantly adjust and re-construct their identities to be included and accepted in their host country. However, their experiences in seeking appropriate employment and progressing in their career trajectory reveal their ongoing struggles with the implication of being different on the basis of gender, ethnicity and nationality. Whilst sharing similar experiences associated with being Iranian women, their differences such as age, education, English proficiency and local work experience have situated them in different scales of employability. Farah, a first generation Iranian woman, describes her predicament by outlining her experiences of finding jobs:

> The language is the main problem to everyone who migrate to any country for the first time. There were other problems too like work experience. 'How much work experience do you have in Australia? Ok none?' It was difficult. Because of that I couldn't get into jobs that I wanted. I had to accept any job became available. I believed in order to progress and become part of Australian society I had to accept what they offer me. You don't have a choice; you can't decide yourself. You don't have a good English; you don't have any work experiences.

Leila, who also belongs to the first generation group and is currently working as a book keeper for a small business, while addressing similar concerns such as language and work experience, also highlights the employability limitations associated with age:

> It was difficult to find a job. I applied for many jobs but was unsuccessful. Because by the time I completed the English course and one year of TAFE I was forty. So for a forty years old woman with no work experiences it was extremely difficult… I even applied for volunteer positions. They didn't even give me volunteer job.

After a long time searching, applying, being rejected, and re-applying, Leila eventually secured a part time position in a childcare centre. However, her issues did not end there, as other challenges began to emerge:

> I think they [her Australian colleagues] didn't like to become friend with me. We spoke but only about work. I could see that they didn't want any friendship. I could feel it. It was fine with my Indian or Asian colleague. We were friends. But not with the locals. Specially the younger ones. They were worse. Sometimes they weren't

nice. They weren't saying anything but I could see it in their facial expression and body language. They didn't seem to like me. So I tried not to get too close.

Such exclusion and rejection – regardless of its antecedence – made Leila more isolated at work and forced her to distance herself from her Australian work colleagues. Mona's narrative similarly addresses gendered and racialised inequality in workplaces:

> I have seen women in workplaces are mainly holding inferior positions, I think. Even when you are working in a particular level and a promotion comes available, those who are young, younger men they get it. I have observed this myself at work. I worked somewhere for six to seven years. They hired a new boy and after one or two years, when a promotion came up. He was twenty-five or twenty-six years old but they gave it to him. I thought that now I have a business degree and I am ready and I was hopeful that I can get a better position. But I am afraid my workplace didn't care so much. I think I have been ignored. I am a hard worker but it is not always about how hard you work.

In Mona's experience and opinion, it is not the level of education or the hardworking attitude of employees which counts, but belonging to dominant and favourable gender and racial categories. Furthermore, working as a nurse in a female-dominated environment, Soheila analyses her situation at work from the perspective of colonialism when she emphasises the power structure within institutions:

> They believe that it is their exclusive right to be your boss and your manager. They think that if you are immigrant who left your country and now live here have no right to disagree and question such privilege, 'we are the boss', 'don't bother asking'. And the younger they are, the more arrogant and disrespectful they are. It is like that they want them to act and behave like that so they stay in charge and have a power to control us. And it is increasing.

Soheila's experience, being set in a very female-dominated context, highlights the hierarchy of power amongst them where young, white Australians possess the power to control the recruitment processes and performance appraisal procedures. She continues by adding:

> To be honest with you I think I have not been able to reach my potential here. I have not reached the position which I believe I deserve because of hidden and unwritten discrimination (*tabize naneveshte)* in Australia. You know on paper it looks beautiful when they say 'we are all equal. There is no discrimination' but in reality it is different. They always want to keep you down so they can control you. They don't let

you to become a manager. It is always for them. You know what I mean, they can't accept it, I did become a manager but nobody listened to me so I resigned.

Soheila's management experience was short-lived as she realised that being promoted to a management position was one issue, but being able to survive in such a position is another. In her experience, she believed that not being a native Australian manager disqualified her from being considered as a competent manager who can lead and manage others. For someone who is a high achiever, highly educated, and has an impressive resume, she felt ignored and disregarded as a human being who, despite her differences, deserves access to the same opportunities as white Australian women. Banoo, on the other hand, entered the workforce and climbed the promotion ladder faster and easier:

I didn't have any problem getting into the workforce, by the time I got to work my English was as the same level as other Australians and my accent was also similar obviously not 110% and my name was an English name and everyone knew by that time that regardless of my background I grew up here. I wasn't religious or I wasn't wearing scarf or anything like that and I would pretty well fit in the environment.

Banoo, a marketing executive working in a female-dominated industry, highlighted that her fluency in English, having an English name, and not wearing hijab were some of the factors which contributed to her getting into the workforce easier. This implies that not having such attributes and qualities could perhaps lessen her employability and a chance of advancing in her career. Additionally, she believes that she was given the same opportunities and had never faced discriminated in that sense:

I didn't feel left out or discriminated at work because I am a woman or because of my background. I think I would probably have the same opportunities as if I was an Australian. Comparing myself with a lot of Australian girls that I went to uni with, I am probably much higher up than they are and that is I think probably because I worked quite hard and I don't think I have ever been discriminated against at all.

Unlike Soheila and her experience as a nurse working in a female-dominated environment, Banoo claimed that she was neither ignored, nor discriminated against at work, and in fact received the necessary support and encouragement to progress in her career trajectory. In contrast, Melika's narrative contains an issue which was experienced by most of the second generation participants in this research – having a non-English name on their resume.

I applied for a graduate position with my best friend with the same academic scores and same experiences, like our resumes were pretty much copied from each other. So

we applied for it. Then Michelle got a phone call and I didn't. I know it was because of my name. Then you'd change your name. so you put it as Monica and then you get a call from them. Then I was fortunate that one of the ladies I used to go to university with, she recommended me to a company that I am working at as a recommended graduate. So I bypassed everything. I did change my name in my resume to Monica and a few other names. And Monica worked, same as Monique.

Melika had to manage difficulties finding a professional position by changing her name to an English name, at least on her resume. Melika encountered a type of discrimination that exists and results in applicants with ethnic backgrounds forging a name that sounds familiar to recruiting agents in order to be accepted and included in the process. Not getting a preliminary phone call from the recruiters made Melika frustrated, especially when her friend did. Melika knew she only needed to pass the first hurdle and to get an interview, hence changing her name on her resume. Although having a connection and referral from a friend allowed her to avoid the recruiting process and get an interview and ultimately a graduate position, her experience of applying for jobs was mostly overwhelming and intimidating. Similarly, Nastaran's narrative of her job inquiry and recruitment as a young lawyer woman, which encompasses her predicament and frustration, reemphasises the inequality and discrimination that exists within Australian organisational culture and particularly in the recruiting and employment space:

> I think it is extremely difficult for any immigrant to find a job. Because I suspect the employers look for certain criteria. They look for, normally in my view, looking for an Anglo-Saxon name from a particular university or living in a certain suburb, especially in Law. My experience has often been that the law graduate who work in larger law firms tend to have either a parent or relative who is already a partner of a law firm and they recommend them. It is a very white, Anglo-Saxon male dominated environment. When I actually became qualified as a lawyer, my grades were excellent, I had an honour degree, I had great work experience, and when I applied for a graduate position, it was very very challenging. so I was fortune enough to have my contact who recommended me to this particular law firm. So I got the job. But I found it very interesting that I was the only person in this entire law firm with few hundred lawyers with a non-Anglo-Saxon name.

In Nastaran's case it is not only her visual differences which situated her in a vulnerable position, but also the industry which she was aiming to get into. When the priority and privilege is given to male, white Anglo-Saxon candidates, her only chance was to make use of

her connections in order to bypass the formality of a bureaucratic recruiting system. Nastaran, in adding to her experience working for this particular law firm, explains:

> It was a very traumatic experience. And it is difficult. Because the type of young lawyer who work for these firms are very white Australians, so automatically you are not going to fit in with them for that reason. But the other element of it is that lawyer are very competitive especially at younger age and they all fight for that partnership position to go up a rank in a law firm, so you don't develop any genuine relationship anyway. So I don't know if it was because who I was or the competition that you can't have a genuine connection with these people.

Whether it was her gender, ethnicity, religion, or just competitiveness amongst young lawyers, Nastaran felt a sense of exclusion and rejection at work which as she described as a 'very traumatic experience'. Being different is one issue but becoming someone else is another. Whilst her differences, whether her appearance, accent, name and nationality, are part of who she is, they are also the reasons why she has to constantly cast a new identity under different circumstances.

These women, whether first or second generation and regardless of their age, have made tremendous efforts to assimilate and embrace the Australian culture in various extents. Their narratives demonstrate the extent to which they managed difficulties associated with their age, inability to speak English, and their commitment to their culture and traditions in order to fit in and belong whether at work or in their everyday activities. It was not only their transition to a new environment that created continuous challenges, it was also finding how manage the ways in which this new environment treated them. Although living in a multicultural and egalitarian country has its advantages for the Iranian women in this research, their experiences of gendered and racial discrimination, particularly at work, demonstrate their challenges with the organisational diversity and inclusion culture within the Australian context. Assimilation and immersion of Australian culture and norms – for instance adopting an English name and taking an Australian accent – allowed second-generation Iranian women in this research to advance in their work trajectory, though not without challenges. However, the first-generation Iranian women faced different challenges which disadvantaged them in progressing and advancing in their professions. Regardless of such differences, what they all had to accept – willingly or otherwise – was that their identities are in a ceaseless cycle of transition from one form to another where their being and who they really are continually shifts and transforms in attempts to belong. Constantly negotiating their differences and confronting discrimination and prejudice in their workplaces reinforces the importance of harnessing effective equality

and inclusion practices in work and organisation where the individual differences whether gender, ethnicity, nationality and religion are accepted, supported and empowered.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1.   Discussion

The research presented in this thesis provided an exploratory analysis of the diasporic experiences of first and second generation Iranian-Australian women through a transnational feminist approach and narrative analysis. Drawing on multi-disciplinary literature, this research for the first time in the field of gender, work and organisation, has studied Iranian-Australian women in a post-colonial context. Through narrative analysis of transnational experiences of Iranian-Australian women and intersecting gender, ethnicity, nationality and religion in a post-colonial context, new theoretical contributions were developed. This research has not only enabled an underrepresented minority group to share their narratives of diaspora and dislocation, but also reinforced taking into account the individuals' gender, ethnicity, religion and nationality differences and the ways in which they intersect and interact in attempts to belong. More specifically, this research demonstrates how both first and second generation Iranian-Australian women negotiate their differences in assimilating and integrating, as well as in dealing with gendered and racialised discrimination while living and working in a multicultural yet Anglo-Celtic Australia.

This research reveals how Iranian-Australian women, who left their home country and migrated to Australia in pursuit of a better life, have learnt to negotiate their differences through continuous reconstruction of their transnational identities with the intention to assimilate and belong. Identity as a status of constant 'becoming as well as being' (Hall, 1990) indicates how dynamic and ever-changing this phenomenon is. In other words, individuals' identities are constantly constructed and shaped through their social interactions and exchanges compelling them to form multiple identities and to constantly negotiate between their states of being and becoming (Linstead & Pullen, 2006). It is understood from their narratives that Iranian-Australian women's collective and somewhat stabilised identities such as gender, ethnicity, nationality and religion are destabilised and undermined by migration and displacement imposed on them by the revolution and war in Iran and the current xenophobia and fear of others in Australia (Hall, 1991; Jackson, 1998). In other words, through migration, their identity as a Muslim Iranian woman living in Iran suddenly assumed different meanings and interpretations in a new country. Throughout the process of negotiation and assimilation, both first and second generation women have experienced some

differing level of identity crisis. Their attempts to belong through negotiating their differences create a new hybrid space where they can be both empowered through giving voices to their differences and discouraged through postcolonial social and political power structure and white supremacy (Bhabha, 1990; Mirza, 2009).

In a multicultural country like Australia and through its multiculturalism policy, minority groups for decades have been encouraged to preserve and celebrate their cultures and traditions, but at the same time, they are expected to assimilate and adapt with the host country's culture, norms and standards (Ang & Stratton, 1998; Schech & Haggis, 2001). For minority people including the Iranian-Australian women in this research, living with multiple cultures and histories in multicultural yet white Australia, means dealing with complex and ambiguous situations of both acceptance and rejection by society, before becoming partially or fully immersed in Australian culture. Since the 9/11 and recent terrorist attacks initiated by ISIS and Islamic extremists, certain minorities living in countries such as the United States and Australia are further marginalised because of their similar attributes to Arab/Muslim/Middle Eastern people, regardless of their integration and assimilation in the host society (Bhatia & Ram, 2009). Nowadays, Islamophobia and fear of terrorism have parallelised the majority population to the point of becoming intolerant to certain differences such as Muslim women minorities who are bound by their embodied differences i.e. wearing hijab, or eating halal food (Mirza, 2013). Sara Ahmed (2003, p. 377) describes such fear as

> "fear [that] operates as an affective economy of truth. Fear [that] slides between signs and sticks to some bodies and not others. For example, the judgment that someone could be a terrorist draws on past and affective associations that sticks various signs together… Such bodies become constructed as fearsome as a threat to the very truths that are reified as life itself".

In recent times in Australia, such fear has reached the point that the multiculturalism which Australians take pride in, has continuously become criticised and scrutinised by certain members of the Australian parliament such as Pauline Hanson and her party 'One Nation', who claim that they are "standing up for the silent majority" – the majority of the white Australian population (ABC News, September 22, 2016). Politicians like Hanson and the media, together and in the name of free speech and democracy, have been tainting the air and fuelling the public fear of Islamic terror attacks. Referring to a recent survey requested by the 'One Nation' party, to determine where Australia stands in regards to support a ban on Muslim immigration, Hanson reconfirms her stance in believing that her party gives the public a voice and speaks on behalf of the 'silent majority' (ABC News, September 22, 2016).

Surveying 1000 Australians, the results show that 49% were in favour of a ban on Muslim immigration, for two main reasons: the first being integration issues of Muslim immigrants; the second being terrorist threats by Muslims (ABC News, 2016). Drawing a conclusion based on a result drawn from such a small sample only fuels unreasonable fear thinking and fear politics. Racial and religious fear in Australia associated with differences such as wearing hijab or a turban is not a newly developed issue as situations such as the Cronulla riots in 2005 attest, it is just being given another chance to resurface triggered by the current conflicts between Islamic and non-Islamic politics and ideologies (Syed & Pio, 2010). Given such circumstances, being assimilated and being accepted are constantly challenged by mainstream white Australia, making it extremely difficult for the Muslim and Muslim-looking population in Australia to belong and to be part of the same society they live in. Through accepting and embracing the Australian culture, Iranian women in this research developed skills to accept their differences, and learnt to live with their complex identities of being Iranian and becoming Australian or a combination, and negotiate between them (Hall & Gay, 1996). However, their nationality and religious beliefs, at times, have influenced the extent to which they were accepted or rejected by Australian society.

Nevertheless, Iranian-Australian women in this research demonstrate a constant reinvention of self and reconstruction of identities in trying to sustain healthy connections between Iranian and Australian culture while negotiating their differences in multicultural, yet white Anglo-Celtic Australia (Clifford, 1994). Individual experiences vary based on individual differences which challenges the general misconception that "all immigrants undergo a universal psychological process of acculturation and adaptation" (Bhatia & Ram, 2009, p.140). Generalisation and simplification of immigrants' experiences overlooks the multiplicity and complexity of their personal, cultural and social situations and circumstances (Shabbar, 2012). Similarly, Hall (1991) and Gilroy (1993, 1997) contest the universalist and homogenising views through using the concept of diaspora and the ways in which social, political and historical events impact diasporic identity formation. Individuals make sense of their self, others and their circumstances in their own unique ways, making it imperatively important to understand them from their individual perspectives (Falcon & Nash, 2015). This is particularly relevant to Iranians who are descended from different generation, class, religion, ideology and education levels (Mostofi, 2003). Thus, transnational connections enable both first and second generation women to develop and express their transnational identities (Somerville,2008), and sustain a healthy network and connection with both their Iranian-ness and Australian-ness.

Following the discussions on transnational identity, differences and their associated challenges living in a multicultural country, this research demonstrates that gendered and racialised discrimination constantly emerges in Iranian-Australian women's daily activities, including work. It also shows the ways in which these individuals manage and negotiate their differences when facing discriminatory behaviours, reemphasising the importance of avoiding generalisation and simplification of transnational experiences (Shabbar, 2012). Being different is generally associated with certain sets of socially constructed attributes which are both relational and contextual; relational as being the relationship between identities, and contextual as being the context which shapes identities' meanings, roles and expectations (Adib & Gurrier, 2003, p. 415). In other words, intersection of gender, ethnicity, race and other socially constructed identities are also impacted by the locations, circumstances and situations that they are constructed within. Thus, the level of discrimination in workplaces is not only influenced by the extent to which minorities negotiate their differences to assimilate and belong, it is also influenced by their workplaces' diversity and inclusion culture (Anthias, 2012; Calás & Smircich, 2011; Zanoni, & Janssens, 2003). The values, beliefs and assumptions associated with differences can 'foster and create social hierarchies' (Crenshaw, 2008, p.298). Being different in postcolonial contexts such as Australian workplaces can further empower one category and disempower the other, i.e. the white male category holds privilege and hegemonic power over ethnic women and women of colour; the kind of privilege which reflects dominance and absolute control of one gender or race over the other and gives them authority to make assumptions about minorities and their values. Thus, the 'unearned advantage' and 'conferred dominance' assumed by white people and their arbitrary power over the 'dark-skinned other' needs to be constantly challenged in order to make a change, even if it takes many decades (McIntosh, 2008, p. 69).

Power, inequality and colonial hegemonic structure and the extent to which transnational women in this research encountered such experiences indicates that practices such as promotional structures which are generally more advantageous to male professionals than women and in particular ethnic women have hindered their career and career progression. Professional work organisations such as hospitals and law firms have often implemented such bureaucratic practices and viewed them as crucial to success of their organisations (Bird & Rhoton, 2011). Whether Soheila as a nurse working in a female-dominated environment or Nastaran as a lawyer working in a white, male dominated workplace, gendered and racialised inequality is always evident in workplaces. What is also evident is that being a woman is one challenge, but being a woman with differences such as ethnicity, nationality and religion is a far more complicated issue. Organisational bureaucratic practices can disempower ethnic

women such as Soheila and Nastaran regardless of their academic and professional achievements and merits (Zanoni & Janssens, 2007), preventing them from moving forward in their career trajectory. As this research demonstrates, those women who are more assimilated and integrated in Australian culture and also work in a female-dominated industry seem to be satisfied with their career trajectory. But what if they did not fully assimilate and integrate? What if they did not adopt an English name? What if they wore hijab? Further research perhaps can explore the relations between assimilation and career progression of minority women in Australia.

5.2.   Conclusion: From theory to Practice

Following studies in the field of gender, work and organisation (see Acker 1990, 2006; Esser et al., 2010,2014; Holvino, 2010; Pio, 2007; Pio & Esser, 2014; Tienari et al., 2005), this research has shed some light on the transnational challenges of minority Iranian-Australian women and their experiences of discrimination and inequality within the Australian workforce from the perspective of first and second generations. The transnational feminist approach in this research has offered a great help in understanding the power dynamic and privilege and how to avoid reproducing and validating the status quo of mainstream research practices (Falcón, 2016). Through a critique of the homogenisation and categorisation of women's experiences, and especially ethnic women's experiences, , transnational feminism provided a better understanding marginalised transnational individuals in diaspora through disturbing reductionist minority women studies. Whilst numerous transnational studies have benefited from using transnational feminism when studying minority women, this approach is newly emerging in the field of gender, work and organisation (Esser et al., 2010; Esser & Tedmanson, 2014; Pio, 2007). Using transnational feminism   enabled the analysis of diaspora and transnational identity in a multicultural yet Anglo-Celtic dominated country, Australia. Whilst this research reflects on minority women's experiences of acceptance and inclusion, it also draws attention to the importance of further study of inequality and diversity in Australian workplaces, especially from the perspectives of gendered and racialised minorities.

In this research, I have drawn attention to a much underrepresented minority group in Australia, first and second generation Iranian-Australian women who, after overcoming the challenges associated with revolution and war through migration and moving to Australia, found themselves battling with identity crisis associated with gender, ethnicity, nationality and religious differences. Through an analysis of their narratives, I have explored their

experiences of gendered and racialised discrimination in workplaces. Transnational feminism decolonises essentialist knowledge production of marginalised women (cf. Liu, in press).

Due to the paucity of transnational feminist studies in the field of gender, work and organisation and a lack of anti-essentialist debates, in this Master of Research thesis, I have developed a theoretical contribution through introducing and then analysing minority women's narratives of diaspora and displacement and encouraging further transnational discourses in the field of gender, work and organisation. I believe I have only provided a partial picture through this thesis and future research is needed to explore and adequately capture the complexity of minorities' constant struggle in tackling gendered and racialised discrimination in workplaces, and their ongoing challenges in career and career progression. Given the underrepresentation of Iranian-Australian women in the Australian context, future research can further explore Iranian-Australian women and their engagement with Australian organisation and their diversity and inclusion policies and practices.

This research has laid a solid foundation for further research of Middle Eastern women in Australian workplaces, especially considering the current fear of Muslims induced by recent terrorist attacks by Muslim extremists and rise of politicians such as Pauline Hanson who condemns multiculturalism and minority inclusion in Australian society. Given the ongoing challenges faced by minorities and the current political debates about radical Muslims and war on terror, Muslim communities suffer more than before as they are automatically associated with Muslims extremists and their ideologies. Therefore, it is imperative for gender and ethnicity researchers to continue to stand up for such inequalities and to continuously question unearned white privilege and white supremacy which legitimise gender, ethnicity, nationality and religion marginalisation and discrimination (McIntosh 2008; Swan, in press). As a marginalised Iranian-Australian woman, I strongly believe that minority voices are not represented enough, collapsed as these experiences are into migrant experiences, and they need to be heard more frequently. It is through sharing these voices that stories of marginalisation and discrimination can be narrated and shared in attempts to destabilise the unequal power structure and disrupt male and white supremacy.

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Appendix 1: Research Questions

Interview Questions:

First Generation Group:

1. When did you come to Australia?
2. Why did you decide to come to Australia? What was your main motivation?
3. What were your experiences in migrating and settling in Australia?
   - Prompt: any challenges?
   - Support system?
4. How long after your arrival did you enter the Australian workforce?
5. What was your experience working in Australia?
   - Prompt: any challenges?
   - Support systems
6. How do you find yourself in terms of your career progression?
7. What are your career aspirations?
8. In your opinion, what challenges do Iranian-Australian women face in Australia?
9. Have you encountered any discriminative, prejudicial or stereotyping experiences at work since moved to Australia?
10. In your opinion, how much the living and working situations has changed since moved to Australia?

Additional questions for second-generation women:

1. When did you come to Australia?
2. Why did you decide to come to Australia? What was your main motivation?
3. What were your experiences in migrating and settling in Australia?
   - Prompt: any challenges?
   - Support system?
4. How long after your arrival did you enter the Australian workforce?
5. What was your experience working in Australia?
   - Prompt: any challenges?
   - Support systems
6. How do you find yourself in terms of your career progression?
7. What are your career aspirations?
8. In your opinion, what challenges do Iranian-Australian women face in Australia?
9. Have you encountered any discriminative, prejudicial or stereotyping experiences at work since moved to Australia?
10. In your opinion, how much the living and working situations has changed since moved to Australia?
11. What was your experiences growing up in Australia?
12. How do you manage balancing the cultural differences at home and outside home?

Appendix 2: Ethics Approval

Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Research Office Research Hub, Building C5C East Macquarie University NSW 2109 Australia T: +61 (2) 9850 4459 http://www.research.mq.edu.au/ ABN 90 952 801 237

30 June 2016
Dear Professor Pullen
Reference No: 5201600409

Title: Iranian-Australian women in diaspora: Gendered and racialized discrimination and the implications for work and organisation

Thank you for submitting the above application for ethical and scientific review. Your application was considered by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC (Human Sciences & Humanities)).
I am pleased to advise that ethical and scientific approval has been granted for this project to be conducted by:

• Macquarie University

This research meets the requirements set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007 – Updated May 2015) (the National Statement).
Standard Conditions of Approval:
1. Continuing compliance with the requirements of the National Statement, which is available at the following website:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research
2. This approval is valid for five (5) years, subject to the submission of annual reports. Please submit your reports on the anniversary of the approval for this protocol.
3. All adverse events, including events which might affect the continued ethical and scientific acceptability of the project, must be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.
4. Proposed changes to the protocol and associated documents must be submitted to the Committee for approval before implementation.
It is the responsibility of the Chief investigator to retain a copy of all documentation related to this project and to forward a copy of this approval letter to all personnel listed on the project.
Should you have any queries regarding your project, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on 9850

4194 or by email ethics.secretariat@mq.edu.au

The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures are available from the Research Office website at:
http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics
The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Karolyn White
Director, Research Ethics & Integrity,
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee (Human Sciences and Humanities)

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research

Council's (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and the

CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.