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HAJI-MOHAMAD, SITI,MAZIDAH,BINTI

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**Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism:  
An Ethnographic Study of Malay  
Malaysian Students' Cultivation and  
Performance of Cosmopolitanism on  
Facebook and Offline.**

SITI MAZIDAH HAJI MOHAMAD

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Geography

University of Durham

2014

**Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism:  
An Ethnographic Study of Malay Malaysian  
Students' Cultivation and Performance of  
Cosmopolitanism on Facebook and Offline.**

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**SITI MAZIDAH HAJI MOHAMAD**

**Abstract**

This thesis analyses the potential of Facebook as well as offline social interactions and experiences in cultivating cosmopolitan sensibilities and the performance of cosmopolitanism in both online and offline spaces. Cosmopolitanism has received immense attention in academia but its discourse is slow to incorporate everyday online experiences. In today's world, when the use of social network sites such as Facebook have become commonplace, it is imperative that use of such a site, and its ensuing experiences, be included in the field of cosmopolitanism studies. This thesis contends for its inclusion and has chosen Facebook as the site from which to study UK-based Malay Malaysian students' online experiences, in order to investigate the potential of the site in cultivating the students' cosmopolitan sensibilities and cosmopolitan performances together with the students' offline experiences. This thesis emphasises the need for the voices of the individuals to be heard, and their experiences to be understood within their own contexts. By capturing their voices, the nuances in their use of the site, their cosmopolitan sensibilities and performances could be obtained. To achieve this, an ethnographic

approach that employed semi-structured interviews and online observation is used. This research has captured the voices of the respondents and found a specific form of cosmopolitanism that is influenced by their dominant Malay Muslim context, so creating what this thesis author has labelled as rooted Muslim cosmopolitanism. This concept refers to a form of cosmopolitanism rooted in the students' Malay Muslim identity; the online and offline contexts they are in which are a replication of the host society's contexts and their own home contexts. The discussion centres on the students' negotiation of Malay Muslim identities in both online and offline contexts. This thesis contributes a different angle to the understanding of cultural religious cosmopolitanism for Malaysian and the general cosmopolitanism discourse, through a number of elements including: online experiences, international students as cosmopolitan actors and everyday experiences. An analytical framework was employed that separates cosmopolitan sensibilities and performance by using the six dynamics of online cosmopolitanism: self-reflexivity; motivation; affordances and features; self-disclosure and self-censorship; collapsed contexts and audience; and privacy, as well as a call for rethinking what cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan are.

Key words: Facebook, Cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan sensibilities, cosmopolitan performance, Malay Malaysian, international students, identity, Islam.

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# Statement of Copyright

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*Siti Mazidah Haji Mohamad. Brunei Darussalam, 2014*



# Chapter One

## Introduction

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### 1.1 Cosmopolitanism on Facebook – an Introduction

“We live in an age of connection, one that is accelerated by the internet. This increasingly ubiquitous, immensely powerful technology often leads us to assume that, as the number of people online grows, it inevitably leads to a smaller, more cosmopolitan world. We’ll understand more and share more with people from other cultures. In reality, it is easier to ship bottles of water from Fiji to Atlanta than it is to get news from Tokyo to New York” (Anonymous review cited in Zuckerman, 2013).

This comment made by a reviewer of Ethan Zuckerman’s (2013) book “Rewire: Digital Cosmopolitans in the Age of Connection” speaks rather bleakly of the potential of the Internet in bringing people closer to one another and the potential of the Internet in cultivating cosmopolitans. Such a view of the Internet particularly caught my interest for its sceptical view. Online spaces/sites have the potential in bringing people together; however, the human tendency to “flock together” became an, if not the, obstacle for going beyond one’s social network, which confines our knowledge within specific contexts (Zuckerman, 2013). Such a situation could possibly render cosmopolitanism difficult to achieve. Derrida (1994) has written “that the development of sciences and technologies...breaks open the path, for better or worse, for a cosmopolitical communication”. What does this say

about the cosmopolitan experiences of others? Has the potential of Internet, in this aspect of socio-cultural development, been realised? Silverstone (2006) has asked “(t)he media have extended reach, but have they also extended understanding? The media have provided the resources for an enlarged mentality, but have they facilitated representative thinking and judgements?” Elijah Anderson (2004) writes an account of what can be called a thin<sup>1</sup> form of cosmopolitanism that he observed develop out of people watching, eavesdropping or unintentionally overhearing others’ conversations, and actual conversations in a neutral space, like the Reading Terminal Market. A neutral space like this, which he labels a cosmopolitan canopy, “allow(s) people of different backgrounds the chance to slow down and indulge themselves, observing, pondering, and in effect, doing their own folk ethnography, testing or substantiating stereotypes and prejudices or, rarely, acknowledging something fundamentally new about the other” (p. 25). The presence of people from different ethnic backgrounds, ages and professions, to name but a few, opens up the possibility of cosmopolitan engagements however trivial or thin they may be. I find his observation worth noting as it highlighted the possibilities of cosmopolitanism, albeit a simple (thin) form of cosmopolitanism, that could emerge in public spaces with neutral settings; the possibilities of encounters in encouraging engagements, through a simple action such as verbal chat, exemplifying more than just social engagements but also respect and using differences as a resource to understand others. Drawing from this idea of an online

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<sup>1</sup> Thin cosmopolitanism used here is dissimilar to the general understanding of thin cosmopolitanism that is “detachment (that) allows for transcending the boundaries of one’s culture or locale” (Roudometof, 2005: 113). Here thin refers to mundane everyday (unconscious) overhearing of others’ conversation in public and also temporary social engagement.

cosmopolitan canopy Facebook, a networking site with its features, affordances and contexts, could be regarded as a cosmopolitan canopy too. In fact cosmopolitan canopies, because of the multiple spaces of interactions created on the site alone. Social interactions can be conducted at multiple places within the site such as via the message feature, comment section of the status updates, comment section of photos and photo album. But what differentiates Facebook (in this research), from the open space Anderson writes about, is its apparent socio-culturally bounded contexts, creating a space far from neutral. Therefore I question whether cosmopolitanism could develop through online interactions on Facebook. And if yes, how can and does cosmopolitanism develop, what discursive resources do users draw from their everyday online interactions (cosmopolitan sensibilities) and how are cosmopolitanism sensibilities (openness, tolerance and flexibility) performed on the site? Despite the focus on online site (and online space) I also acknowledged that experiences in online and offline spaces are interconnected and mutually constitutive. Therefore this research will also look at how offline experiences of the Malay Muslim Malaysian international students are also shaping their cosmopolitan sensibilities and performances online. Further to this and most importantly how does the identity of an individual user (in this case, Malay Muslim) shapes their everyday online and offline experiences, their use and experience of the site (Facebook) and in the process their specific Malay Muslim cosmopolitanism.

Deeper understanding of new social media interactions and engagements, as well as everyday cultural cosmopolitanism, will help us answer the research questions. I

will discuss the gaps in the cosmopolitanism literature to highlight the research aims and objectives shortly. Prior to that a short account of my PhD journey before discussing the gaps is provided as my experience, prior to my enrolment into the PhD in Human Geography programme at Durham University, UK, and the ensuing experiences up to this day, have shaped and influenced this research and this thesis. Therefore, looking back to five years ago, prior to the formal start of the research and the experiences I had up till now, is important in shedding light into this research interest, the research itself and this thesis.

## **1.2 Key Research Aims and Objectives**

A researcher is never detached from his/her research study, as many experienced scholars have emphasised (Crang and Cook, 2007; boyd, 2008; Baym, 2008) and this is exactly how I feel about this PhD thesis. The focus of this study, in particular social interactions on Facebook, is not unfamiliar to me. As a long time user of the site I was already familiar, prior to the research, with the features, infrastructures and scores of socio-cultural and religious activities conducted on the site. I was always fascinated by how people interacted online; using my own experiences and patterns of use I questioned how others (my network) used Facebook, making my own judgements and conclusions of their online actions. I was interested in finding out how users used the site, what influenced their online sharing, what they share and what they refused to share, with whom they shared certain matters and if there were any discrepancies in their online-offline identities. I came to Durham University with definite predetermined research objectives: to investigate how

Facebook is used and the experiences users had while using the site. Inevitably, the research objectives and questions changed as my research interests evolved.

The early stage of my formal PhD journey was filled with academic readings on Information and Communication Technology (ICT), new social media engagements, identity constructions and contestations online, and exploring academic work that engaged in offline-online experiences. From the academic readings on ICT, new social media and eventually going to the debate on deterritorialisation of nation-states, I came across cosmopolitanism (a concept which, at that time, was very new to me) that has received a great deal of attention from numerous disciplines such as Anthropology, Geography, Sociology, and Education. Due to the different approaches and the variations in the conceptualisation of cosmopolitanism from different disciplines, this concept becomes a highly elusive one. The research conducted on cosmopolitanism by different disciplines falls into several interrelated contemporary cosmopolitan themes: global concept, cultural cosmopolitanism, legal cosmopolitanism, political cosmopolitanism and civic cosmopolitanism. While engaging with materials on cosmopolitanism from different disciplines I became particularly interested in the cultural aspect of cosmopolitanism, where the idea of cultivating global justice is the main focus in this culturally diverse and apparently globalised world. There has been an immense debate going on in the past decade, within cultural cosmopolitanism, looking at the characteristics of a cosmopolitan, trying to identify who are considered cosmopolitan actors and re-defining this

elusive<sup>2</sup> concept to further understand what cosmopolitanism is really all about (Waldron, 2000). Within this cultural aspect of cosmopolitanism, a number of issues were highlighted, such as the challenges in creating a cosmopolitan actor through travel and education. Apparently, cosmopolitan creation is not a straightforward matter and it is realised that a cosmopolitan cannot be created merely through travelling or being exposed to a cosmopolitan educational curricula. It is important to understand the individuals' everyday situations that motivate them to be a cosmopolitan or extend cosmopolitan openness to others; the situations they found themselves in where they had to extend their openness and performing such openness (Skey, 2012). The academic debate within cultural cosmopolitanism brought cosmopolitanism studies to their current discourse – everyday, varied, discrepant cosmopolitanism that takes into account non-western experiences, and cosmopolitanism accounts of unprivileged individuals. The earlier approach to cultural cosmopolitanism only saw the experiences of the privileged: the globetrotter, transnational migrants, highly educated individuals and was very western-oriented.

Following from the latest debate on the understanding of cosmopolitanism, and specifically the cultural approach to cosmopolitanism, I was interested in understanding socio-cultural interactions between individuals that could result to the creation of a cosmopolitan, an individual who is assumed to be able to transcend his or her own ascribed identity to accept others from different socio-

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<sup>2</sup> This idea of cosmopolitanism as elusive is shared by many cosmopolitanism scholars (such as Skrbiš and Woodward, 2007; Gay Y Blasco, 2010; and Daskalaki, 2012).

cultural and religious backgrounds. While delving deeper into cosmopolitan social interactions, I found a gap within the cosmopolitanism discourse – the apparent lack of focus on online social interactions and a gap in Malaysian cosmopolitanism discourse – the apparent neglect of Malaysian (international) students’ everyday experiences. The following research questions and objectives will address the aforementioned gaps.

### **1.2.1. Research Question 1:**

#### **Could social interactions in Facebook help cultivate cosmopolitanism?**

Summarised Research Objective:

- To explore the types of information made available by other users through micro-scale sharing and what is reflexively absorbed by this group of Malay Muslim Malaysian student participants in this research study.

With regards to the (first) gap within the general cosmopolitanism discourse, in today’s world where new social media engagement is no longer uncommon and social media has been used intensively and extensively for communicating with others, it is surprising that less attention has been given to online social interactions and their cosmopolitanising potentials. Online sites, due to their macro and micro scale sharing, have the potential to connect individual users with one another and allow socio-cultural-religious information to be shared and absorbed, which could eventually create a space filled with resources for cultivating cosmopolitan

sensibilities. Looking into online social interactions helps further our knowledge of theoretical and practical cultural cosmopolitanism. Deeper understanding of cultural cosmopolitanism in online contexts will also allow us to further question and assess what being online means, the potentials of online social interactions, and its drawbacks and in the long run could possibly help us (researchers and individuals) find the factors that could help foster a more global rooted cosmopolitan society.

It is acknowledged that despite having vast potential in connecting individuals, social networking sites such as Facebook are also restricted by users' individualised practices, preferences and interests, as the earlier comment left by the anonymous reviewer on Zuckerman's book demonstrated. It is thus important to investigate the possible factors influencing users' online interactions and engagements, such as their motivation(s) to use the site, the contexts they found themselves in, as well as other matters that might shape their self-disclosure and self-censorship, such as privacy issues. Therefore, this research will first explore the information available on users' Facebooks, via their Facebook friend network and what information is reflexively absorb by the users. Focusing on the types of information that they get on their newsfeed would provide further understanding of what motivates them to use the site in the first place, the eventual motivations and the motivation to search for information. Also, such an empirical orientation would allow me to comprehend what shapes the Facebook users' cosmopolitan sensibilities. The data analysis provide an insight to what discursive resources are available for this group of Malay



Muslim Malaysian students to draw on, as they wittingly or otherwise, shape their cosmopolitan sensibilities; or have them shaped.

As we have witnessed (and experienced), new social media is so ingrained into our everyday activities that it is no longer a question of its role in one's life but to ask exactly how such media are being used by individuals. We are also seeing personalised use of mobile technologies such as mobile phones and tablets, and it is well expected that other new social media, like social network sites, are also personal to an individual even though the same features and infrastructures are available to every user. It is this assumed individualised use of Facebook, made possible by the features, infrastructure and affordances, that is the focus of this research. The evidence found by many researchers into the personalised use of new social media, aroused my curiosity about the potential of individualised online sociability within Facebook, and its cosmopolitanising potential.

### **1.2.2. Research Question 2:**

**What contexts do these Malay Muslim students found themselves in both online and offline? What discursive resources do they draw from their contextualised everyday online interactions (cosmopolitan sensibilities)? How is cosmopolitanism sensibilities (openness, tolerance and flexibility) performed within these contexts?**

Summarised Research objective:

- To investigate the socio-cultural and/or religious contexts the students found themselves in the online space; how collapsed contexts are managed

and how such Malay Muslim Malaysian students maintain their performance of (cosmopolitan) self and identity.

With regards to the (second) gap in the Malaysian cosmopolitanism discourse, this group of Malay Muslim Malaysian international students deserves their own account of not only cosmopolitanism but their use of social media while away from home. Their experiences are of course different from those who stayed in the home country. Considering the large number of Malay Malaysian students overseas (particularly in the United Kingdom), the experiences created by their absence from home and presence overseas as well as online presence and in particular the Muslim identity they carried with them offline and online, it has become imperative that we study this particular group of students to further understand (their specific) Malay Malaysian cosmopolitanism created by these aforementioned contexts – home, overseas, cultural background and Malay Muslim identity. It is interesting to study Muslim identity and social interactions because it challenges ideas of Facebook being use homogenously and we could explore how religious identities are expressed on the site and performed differently. Not simply how others perceived this group of user's online activities but what they themselves expressed.

Thus in this research I placed a great deal of importance on experiences that are expressed by the students themselves, and that were not based on academic observation of the country's political and economic situations, as some scholars of Malaysian discourse had done (such as Yao, 2003; Chong, 2005; and Kahn, 2006; 2008). The importance placed on actual experiences of individuals has been emphasised in the academic debate on cosmopolitanism. Neglecting the

individuals' experiences, voiced by the individuals themselves, would not provide a reliable and truthful understanding of their actual cosmopolitanism. This is where this thesis stands. It argues for the broadening of the scope of cosmopolitanism analysis to include everyday experiences, emphasised greatly in this thesis and evident in the methodology and approaches chosen to obtain the research data. Specifically, I have moved away from confining cosmopolitanism analysis solely within economic and political analysis.

Using the experiences of UK based Malay Malaysian students' everyday online (and offline) social interactions, engagements and experiences on Facebook, this research hopes to highlight the potential of online (and offline) spaces in creating cosmopolitan experiences, via potential social interactions with cultural others. As new social media become more pertinent in our everyday lives it is imperative that studies, focusing on socio-cultural development of a society, look into how online spaces are used and experienced every day but without disregarding the contribution of offline experiences, interactions and engagements. Particular for cosmopolitanism discourse, ignoring online social interactions is a shortcoming. This is not to say that online spaces are significant in *everyone's* life, but at least to acknowledge that online experiences are capable of shaping an individual's self to some extent, would be valuable. It is also hoped that the findings of this research, as shared in this thesis, might be able to provide a different angle to understanding Malay Malaysian cosmopolitanism. To reiterate the points made earlier, there has been relatively little interest in Malay Malaysian cosmopolitanism in the past years. Considering the number of Malay Malaysian international students overseas, their

online-offline experiences and the multiple contexts within, it is vital that the experiences of this group of students to be researched. Nevertheless, the current discourse on Malaysian cosmopolitanism, contributed to by a number of scholars, such as Souchou (2003), Chong (2005) and Kahn (2006, 2008), is significant in understanding this particular ethnic group's – Malay Malaysian – cosmopolitanism; the form of cosmopolitanism that is extended, based on the economic and political situations in the country. According to these three aforementioned scholars, what is experienced by this group of Malay are voluntary extensions of openness and acceptance that are grounded in particular issues, supported by their Malay (and Muslim) identities, resulting in a particular or national cosmopolitanism (Yao, 2003) and/or Islamic cosmopolitanism (Chong, 2005; Kahn, 2006; Kahn, 2008). This again highlights how an individual identity in particular, Muslim identity, is shaping one's cosmopolitanism.

Thus, the second objective is to investigate what contexts (situations) the students find themselves in, considering the infrastructure of Facebook that brought different groups of people with their specific offline contexts into a single, collapsed context on Facebook. Looking into the contexts should provide the social cues, norms and decorum that shape their self-disclosure and self-censorship. This should provide more information on the situations they are in and, in due course, how they manage collapsed context to prevent disruption in their identity management, presentation of self and performance of cosmopolitanism. This leads me to examine their privacy concerns in relation to online social interactions; what are considered as private and public spaces on Facebook and how issues related to

privacy concerns are dealt with in relation to their self-presentation on the site particularly when they are presented with multiple or collapsed contexts online. Rather than just confining the research to their online experience, I will also explore the connectivity between their online-offline lives and experiences to seek how experiences in both spheres are shaping up their cosmopolitan sensibilities and cosmopolitan performance. It has already been proven by numerous research that individual online and offline life are not entirely detached but there is seamless flow of interactions and experiences (Markham, 1998).

To reiterate, this research acknowledged the Facebook users' cosmopolitan experiences but extended the analyses further by including a number of new elements to this research. One: the pervasive use of online sites in many individual's everyday lives creating online and offline hybrid requires the inclusion of online everyday experiences in this research. Two: the inclusion of Malay Malaysians international students as potential cosmopolitans, rather than limiting cosmopolitan actors to the 'New Malay' group, which is characterised by middle class professionals. Three: acknowledging the different contexts this group of students found themselves in, in order for the researcher to analyse how their contexts might create different cosmopolitan experiences. These different contexts are a result of their absence from home, their presence in the United Kingdom (where they study) and their online presence. Four: the separation of cosmopolitan sensibilities (thoughts and feelings) from cosmopolitan performances (actions) analysis, to provide for a thorough understanding of cosmopolitanism. By incorporating these new elements into this research, it is hoped to provide a new angle from which to view and analyse Malay Malaysian cosmopolitanism, as well as

providing new angles to researching cosmopolitanism for the general cultural cosmopolitanism discourse.

Recognising the significance of studying international students' everyday experiences, particularly in online space, in order to understand cosmopolitanism further as well as the context of the Muslim Malay Malaysian students' cosmopolitanism, I designed a study with an ethnographic approach that looks into their Facebook's social interactions, the potential of these interactions to create a cosmopolitan and the ensuing cosmopolitanising experiences as well as their offline social interactions and experiences that significantly shape their cosmopolitan sensibilities and performance, which the remaining chapters will examine and discuss.

### **1.3 Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis is organised as follows:

Chapter one, the introductory chapter, has provided a summary account of this research and this thesis. From the initial interest of this research, the chapter has moved on to introducing cosmopolitanism on Facebook and the research questions and objectives. This chapter also highlighted the gaps in the cosmopolitanism studies in general, and the Malaysian cosmopolitanism discourse in particular, while at the same time pointing out the significance of this research to both discourses. It also emphasises the need to study Malaysian students because of their increasing global mobility in particular to the United Kingdom and their experiences online-offline while away from home.

Chapter two of this thesis sets the context of the study, via a literature review, by discussing the gaps in Malaysian cosmopolitanism studies and the debate within the general cosmopolitanism discourse. It revisits the cosmopolitan 'New Malay' group reviewed in an earlier section and provides new elements (everyday experiences voiced by the individuals themselves; online social interactions; and international students as potential cosmopolitan actors) to incorporate in this research, in order to address the gaps in the literature. Maintaining such a focus sets the agenda for this research, which is the study of UK based Malay Malaysian students' everyday online experiences in cultivating cosmopolitanism.

Chapter three, the framing chapter of this thesis, provides a detailed account of the analytical framework of this research. It first discusses cosmopolitanism as practice and performance conducted in everyday life and argues for seeing cosmopolitanism as both sensibilities (thoughts and feelings) and performance (actions). From there it moves on to discuss separately cosmopolitan sensibilities and cosmopolitan performance. It will be argued in this chapter that it is vital to be cognisant of the differences between cosmopolitan sensibilities and their performance, in order to understand further the specific cosmopolitanism experienced and expressed, as well as performed by the individuals respectively. The chapter also argues that cosmopolitan sensibilities may remain as thoughts and feelings, without being performed at all, which highlights the imperative of having different analytical tools to study sensibilities and performance separately. Using six dynamics: motivation; self-disclosure and self-censorship; collapsed contexts and audience; privacy; self-

reflexivity; affordance and features, this chapter discusses the analytical tools relevant to researching cosmopolitanism which are used in this research.

Chapter four, the methodology chapter, discusses more than just the methods employed to research cosmopolitanism online, but also includes significant dilemmas the researcher faced during the study, such as issues related to presentation of self both online and offline; the ethical issues associated with conducting observation “lurking” on respondents’ Facebook profiles; and the complications associated with adding respondents as the researcher’s Facebook friend. This chapter is structured in a way that should allow readers to follow through the fieldwork and the reflexivity process involved, and how I came to the study with my own set of assumptions, bias, subjectivities and collection of identities as a Malay, a Muslim, a woman, a mother, a wife, and an international student.

Chapters five to seven present and discuss the empirical findings of this research. Chapter five presents the students’ everyday lives on Facebook, and how being on Facebook changes not only their self and how they present themselves, but also the changes to family relationships and friendships. Facebook, with its features, settings and affordances creates new forms of relationship dynamics that are different from offline, but this is not to say that the differences make online and offline life detached; rather both weave in and out creating situations and experiences specific to the individual. This chapter highlights the distinct individual experiences and the dynamics of online relationships in general. By drawing out the



individualised use of the site, and the nuances in the respondents' online experiences, this chapter aims to provide the backdrop for the other two empirical chapters.

Chapter six, the second empirical chapter, follows from the discussion made in the previous chapter whereby Facebook is used and experienced differently by the different users. These nuanced uses of the site provide the backdrop to understanding their cosmopolitan sensibilities that are discussed in this chapter. Due to the nuances in the participants' use of the site, the contexts the students found themselves in, the cosmopolitan sensibilities that are cultivated by their, or another's, online presence and interactions, vary. Facebook, because of its virtual global reach, holds immeasurable potential in transcending their own group, reaching those societies and people who are physically far to reach. It is with this assumption, of the site's potential discursive resources that the users could draw from, that those contributing relevancies are discussed. My argument in this chapter is that despite having a narrow Facebook network, consisting predominantly of own ethnic group of Malay Muslims, the respondents are able to extend cosmopolitan openness by using discursive resources cultivated from religious teachings and offline experiences. What they experience on the site are different forms of rooted cosmopolitanism, based on Islamic teachings, which I labelled as Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism. This concept was then used to inform a discussion of some of the issues regarding the conceptualisation of general cosmopolitanism, including the argument that cosmopolitanism can be a strategy, experienced according to context and time, as well as very personal.

Chapter seven, the final empirical chapter, further draws from the Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism concept discussed in chapter six, in order to discuss the performance of this specific form of cosmopolitanism on Facebook. Here I argue that not all cosmopolitanism sensibilities are performed on the site. Some individuals refused to engage with cultural others, as their way of extending respect and openness. Cosmopolitanism as a strategy, shaped by context and with a temporal aspect, is further discussed in the context of performance of self on the site. This chapter also discusses performance of religiosity within the context of the general western liberal cosmopolitanism that commonly viewed Islamic expression of self as un-cosmopolitan. The argument I made here is that expression of Islamic self can co-exist with cosmopolitanism and this creates a different form of cosmopolitanism: rooted, Muslim cosmopolitanism which was the kind searched for by scholars of cosmopolitanism in the previous and current decade, categorically falling under the discrepant, varied, everyday aspect of the cosmopolitanism debate.

Chapter eight concludes this thesis by recalling the main points of the Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism concept, discussed in chapters six and seven, to highlight the main contribution of this thesis and to demonstrate the points that are significant for future research on cosmopolitanism; specifically cosmopolitanism online, such as Facebook.

# Chapter Two

## Malay Malaysian Cosmopolitanism: Research Background and Literature Review

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### 2.1. Introduction

As highlighted in the Introduction chapter, the main motivation of this thesis is to explore the potential of everyday online interactions by Malay Malaysian students in the United Kingdom on a social network site, Facebook, for cultivating cosmopolitan sensibilities, sociabilities and creating cosmopolitan individuals. The interest in this topic stems from the present multicultural society of Malaysia that comprises three dominant ethnic groups<sup>3</sup> – Malay, Chinese and Indian -- that characterise the country's ethnic divisions. Multiculturalism, and the national policies associated with this ideology of harmony between different ethnic groups, has been implemented and lauded for maintaining social cohesion among the aforementioned ethnic groups. This multicultural ideology adopted by the government, since independence from the British, has proven to some degree to be a success. Although it is important to note that there still remain some dormant ethnic tensions in the country. Since the end of twentieth century, especially in the first decade of the twenty-first century, there has been an outburst of renewed interest in cosmopolitanism as a concept (and/or practice) that regards its adoption to be of a fundamental value in navigating this apparently diverse globalised world.

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<sup>3</sup>The percentage distribution of population by ethnic groups in 2010 was 67.4% for Malay, 24.6% for Chinese and 7.3% for Indian. Source: Population Distribution and Basic Demographic Statistics 2010. Department of Statistics Malaysia.

It has been suggested and believed by a number of scholars that multiculturalism that emphasises ethnic differences and maintaining a socially cohesive society with multiple ethnic groups within to be unsuitable for today's world that has seen deterritorialisation. With this deterritorialisation come the diminishing sovereignty of nation-state to create and manage collective identity and controlling its citizen; growing movement of people across border and the expansion of this base; and the eventual erosion of national identities to more global (based on affiliation) identities (Bauman, 2000; Bauman, 2001; Beck, 2005; Beck, 2011; Hollinger, 2000). Hence the growing attention on cosmopolitanism, not just as a concept but also as a practice. Cosmopolitanism has been applied to political, economic, legal, civic, and cultural aspects of development. At the heart of this research is the aim and desire to explore the potential of this not-really-new cosmopolitanism to bring together societies from different backgrounds and especially from between the ethnic groups in Malaysia. However by expressing so it is not the intention of this thesis to provide clear-cut strategies or plans of implementation of cosmopolitanism agenda for the country to further maintain the ethnic harmony. Rather it seeks out to understand individual's experiences based on everyday life that could lead to the cultivation of cosmopolitan sensibilities, which hopefully would help researchers, government bodies or the individuals themselves to have an idea of cosmopolitanism as both a concept and practice in the context of the Malay Malaysian experiences for future benefits.

Notwithstanding the emphasis placed on policies and development programmes that are multicultural in character, there are elements of cosmopolitanism that are

threaded subliminally within the ideologies and agenda proposed by the country's Prime Ministers. The former fourth Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad's (hereafter Dr Mahathir Mohamad) *Bangsa Malaysia* in Vision 2020, despite no explicit mention of cosmopolitan, is seemingly cosmopolitan in nature although many would agree that it still emphasises the dominance of Malay and Islam in the country, rather than a singular group of Malaysians. Similarly the former fifth Prime Minister Tun Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi's (hereafter Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) *Islam Hadhari* and current Prime Minister Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak's (hereafter Prime Minister Najib Razak) *1Malaysia* ideology can be considered as being cosmopolitan in characters. This concept has been frequently mentioned (such as in Williamson, 2002; Schottmann, 2011) but rarely discussed and analysed within the Malaysian academic discourse, with the exception of Yao (2003), Chong (2005) and Kahn (2006, 2008) on cosmopolitanism of the Malay society in the context of the country's nationalism, hybridity and modernity. Both Yao (2003) and Chong (2005) analysed the cosmopolitanism of a group of educated Malay middle-class Malaysians labelled as New Malay or *Melayu Baru* (hereafter New Malay). It is with this earlier notion of a new (mentality) Malay which materialised as a group of New Malay, a middle class group, that this thesis is contextualised upon and informed by. What this chapter sets out to do is first introduce readers to the New Malay and then discuss the events in Malaysian history that led to the creation of this new group of Malays. This background of the New Malay provides the backcloth for the cosmopolitan New Malay that Yao (2003) and Chong (2005) portrayed. From a specific group of individual New Malay cosmopolitans, this chapter takes a broader approach to

discussing cosmopolitanism at the national level, where *Bangsa Malaysia* is envisioned by Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1991, when he gave the speech on The Way Forward – Vision 2020. By taking both the grounded level and the national level of already available cosmopolitan experience, this thesis problematises and effectually extends the analysis of Malay Malaysian cosmopolitanism.

Revisiting and problematising the earlier analysis of cosmopolitan New Malay brings the thesis to the relevant debates on cosmopolitanism within the context of this researcher's interests. Cosmopolitanism, in its simple and narrow definition, describes a "Citizen of the World". For the sake of simplicity and a brief introduction to the concept, this definition is accepted unequivocally here. However as this chapter (and this thesis) progresses further a simple definition resembling the aforementioned is open to debate. This chapter and this thesis will see the interests in redefining the concept from the normative, abstract conceptualisation to more grounded everyday experiences; situated cosmopolitanism, which is inclusive of the non-western experience. These debates follow the changes in the approaches and cosmopolitan actors studied within the cultural cosmopolitanism theme, as this thesis takes a cultural approach to studying cosmopolitanism and understands it as an openness, a sense of fairness and justice to cultural others, rather than taking economic, civic or political approaches. What follows in this section is the discussion on modernity, cosmopolitanism, nationalism and multiculturalism situated within the context of particular Malaysian cosmopolitanism. Towards the end of the section, this thesis highlights the absence of analysis and studies conducted on micro-scale online interactions in social network sites such as

Facebook, considering the growth in the number of social media users and the diversity in its user base and their purposes. Social interactions online have become an extension of offline interactions, therefore cultural studies research cannot afford to miss out on these cultural activities. This discontent with the absence of online interaction analysis within cosmopolitanism studies is further stretched out in the reviews of the literature on youth social media engagements, in the second last section of this chapter. All in all, the sections in this chapter will provide the background to the research and reviews relevant literature on Malaysian cosmopolitanism and youth online interactions. As this thesis questions and critiques the already existing cosmopolitan New Malay analyses, it extends the work on this group of cosmopolitans by proposing the inclusion of Malay Malaysian students who are studying overseas and their everyday online interactions and engagements which could potentially create different forms of cosmopolitan experiences.

## **2.2. The Cosmopolitan ‘New Malay’ – The New Malay (*Melayu Baru*)**

### **Defined.**

This section provides the background to this research by first discussing the idea of the new Malay that was introduced by the former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1991. This New Malay group Dr Mahathir describes provides the backdrop for the analysis of cosmopolitan Malay Malaysian by several scholars of Malaysian studies (Yao, 2003; Chong, 2005), which this thesis aims to revisit, question, critique and extend. The problems with the current cosmopolitanism

approach are highlighted, discussed and extended for the analysis of Malay Malaysian students' experiences. Their individual experiences are considered and included as an important component of the success of Vision 2020, where *Bangsa Malaysia* is envisaged.

This term New Malay has garnered the attention of Malaysian and non-Malaysian scholars, and to some extent the general public, because of the fresh outlook it gives to the Malay Malaysian group. The idea of new\* Malay was first introduced in 1991 by Dr Mahathir, who associated this with a new group of middle-class Malays who, through education and professional occupations, had elevated their socio-economic status in the country and alleviated poverty among some Malays. The actual term 'New\* Malay' was first used by the former Vice President of UMNO Muhammad Taha in 1996 as the title of his book 'The New Malay', developed from Dr Mahathir's conceptualisation of the new breed of Malay in his Vision 2020 (Chong, 2005: 577). This group is the product of the successful affirmative action proposed by the government in 1971 after the race riots in 1969. The build-up of ethnic tension between Malay, the dominant ethnic group in the country, and the Chinese, finally climaxed into a race riot after the country's election<sup>4</sup>. As a multicultural country comprising of three main ethnic groups (Malay, Chinese and Indian) that were brought together to create this plural Malaysia since the independence of Malaysia from the British, tensions are always lurking and become

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<sup>4</sup> The reasons for this race riot are not clear and many parties have provided their own interpretations of what have caused the riots. Prof. Datuk Dr Shamsul Amri Baharuddin said that there is a misconception of the race riot caused by a single factor (Vengadesan, 2008). This highlighted the fact that there are many factors that work individually or together that must have ignited tension, which eventually led to the 1969 riot.



apparent periodically, despite the attempts to ensure social cohesion (Kahn 2008: 263). The building of tension since independence might have accumulated into the 1969 ethnic riot, which hit the country's leaders hard and compelled them to draft the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971, in order to reduce ethnic tensions and the possibility of future riots. It was believed that poverty among Malays and the imbalance in the economic distribution among ethnic groups were among the reasons for the riot; thus the NEP was designed to alleviate poverty that characterised the Malays in that period. In this NEP the *Bumiputera* (Sons of the Soil) are to be given special rights and privileges to protect their political dominance over the country and to be allocated quotas and other economic privileges to boost their economic status which was, at that time, considered very poor (Harper, 1996; Williamson, 2002). The NEP was planned to be in effect from 1971 till 1990 and sets out to distribute wealth equally among ethnic groups by providing means for Malays to secure occupations different than before 1971 (farming and agricultural sector), providing higher quotas to allow more Malays to seek employment and start businesses. Through this affirmative plan a group of Malay individuals managed to improve their socio-economic conditions and were witnessed to have migrated from *kampong* (village) to urban areas (for instance Klang) to take up new occupations, such as administrative positions at factories and away from agricultural related jobs (Williamson, 2002).

For Dr Mahathir, not only does this group mark economic progress but its members also signify a 'mental revolution', a new way of thinking that replaces the old mentality: the idea that they are only capable of jobs related to agriculture. The

'mental revolution' boosted their confidence to embark into other unexplored economic activities, which were dominated by the other main ethnic group – Chinese. For Dr Mahathir (1991 cited in Shamsul 1999: 105) the New Malay "is a community of completely rehabilitated Malays who have gone through a mental revolution and cultural transformation, thus leaving behind feudalistic and fatalistic values. They are a people...who now possess a culture suited to the modern period, who are capable of meeting all challenges, able to compete without assistance, learned and knowledgeable, sophisticated, honest, disciplined, trustworthy and competent". These are New Malays who were originally from families of peasants and fishermen, who "have now become heads of departments, scientists, actuaries, nuclear physicists, surgeons, experts in the field of medicine and aviation, bankers and corporate leaders" (Shamsul, 1999: 105); they are the new middle class bureaucrats. The New Malay differs from the old Malay in this mental revolution. What should remain indelibly fixed in the core of this economic growth and creation of new breeds of Malay is their Malay Muslim identity, as Dr Mahathir states in one of his speeches<sup>5</sup>:

"The new breed of Malays are not alcoholics, gamblers, womanisers, not one who rejects Islam and Malay customs like what is being attempted to be portrayed by those who wish to

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<sup>5</sup> Speech made during the Symposium on Malay resilience in the 21st century (*Jati Diri Melayu Abad 21*) in conjunction with the launching of the Za'ba Chair at the Putra World Trade Centre. 29<sup>th</sup> April 2000.

see the Malays continue to be backward and incapable of dealing with modern day challenges...their faith in Islam was not restricted to form but in portraying true Islamic values like honesty, trustworthiness, sincerity, broad mindedness, tolerance and would not easily brand other Muslims as unIslamic...at the same time, their Malay identity is not eroded. Their spirit, loyalty and their resolve to defend the race and religion will become even stronger and they are readily able to deal with the new IT era”

In Malaysia, all Malays are constitutionally defined as Muslim, therefore when referring to a Malay identity we are also referring to Muslim identity – ““Malay” means a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom” (Source: Constitution of Malaysia, 1963, also formerly known as the Constitution of the Federation of Malaya 1957). What Dr. Mahathir suggests here is an individual (or collective) Malay who, despite the increasingly globalised world and the pressure to achieve economic growth and to surpass other ethnic groups in the country, should remain a true Malay Muslim. Such a person is one seen to be upholding their religion and culture and protecting it, while at the same time becoming more flexible to changes and challenges. Religion, culture and economy can co-exist without having to sacrifice any of these aspirations. This notion of successful New Malay, with a strong religious and cultural identity, is a very interesting concept to explore in an analysis of cosmopolitanism, as it suggests rooted cosmopolitanism that is celebrated at the beginning of the twenty-first century, that had departed from an earlier notion of the concept as ‘rootless and free’ from the confines of place or culture. The above

speech by Dr Mahathir highlights the context of potential Malay cosmopolitans who are Islamic and culturally rooted; being broadminded and tolerating different others, while at the same time remains true to Islam.

From Dr Mahathir's perspectives we could assume that he is envisaging the creation of a new class; however the understanding of what this New Malay is, differs within the Malaysian academic discourse. Kahn (1999), for instance, takes an economic approach, perceiving this group as new capitalists; Shamsul (1999 cited in Chong, 2005: 579) as "an act of cultural distancing in exclusionary politics"; and Yao (2003) takes it as a cultural cosmopolitan consciousness. Based on the material presented above, this thesis encapsulates the understanding of the New Malay first as a metaphor denoting a progressive and a new way of thinking as a Malay, a new way of seeing the world (in Dr Mahathir's words 'mental revolution'), especially in this globalised world influenced by information sharing, travelling both virtually and physically, grounded by everyday experiences within the context of their specific modernity. Second, as a fixed group of educated professional middle class Malays who through education and hard work managed to elevate their position in the society creating a *class* of their own. This thesis is particularly interested in the first notion of New Malay, that is New Malay as a metaphor, as it suggests a new way of thinking, openness and readiness culminated by exposure, whether it is mental or physical travel (Szerzynski and Urry, 2002). It suggests a form of cosmopolitan sensibilities, which this thesis aims to explore among the Malay Malaysian students. While this depiction of the New Malay is a positive one, there have apparently been mixed responses to the success of the NEP 1971 in creating this New Malay group.

The one response class relevant to this research is the qualitative nature (social) of the transformation in the New Malay mentality. Dr Bakri Musa,<sup>6</sup> who is a keen observer of his fellow Malaysians, and the happenings in the country, writes a somewhat negative article about this group. For him, the actions of some of the New Malay with regards to politics and elections are disrespectful. Rather than becoming *Melayu Baru* (New Malay) the Malay, by acting foolishly and being silently condoned by the leader of their party, should have made them *Melayu Barua* (Boorish). Notwithstanding the mixed responses received with regards to this New Malay, this group has been demonstrated, by Yao's study, to have exhibited positive characteristics that he labels as cosmopolitan, which will be reviewed below.

Despite the terms cosmopolitan and cosmopolitanism not being frequently encountered in public nor written on official documents, it can be implied that the government (in particular Dr Mahathir Mohamad) envision a cosmopolitan Malaysian society. In Vision 2020, the blueprint Dr Mahathir Mohamad presented in 1991, he sees nine challenges facing the nation in its future endeavours:

- 1) Establishing a united Malaysian nation made up of one Bangsa Malaysia (Malaysian race);
- 2) Creating a psychologically liberated, secure and developed Malaysian society;

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<sup>6</sup>A Malaysian-born Malay surgeon, who is currently living in the United States. He is a keen observer of Malay and Malaysian society and writes books and blog posts about Malaysia.

- 3) Fostering and developing a mature democratic society;
- 4) Establishing a fully moral and ethical society;
- 5) Establishing a matured liberal and tolerant society;
- 6) Establishing a scientific and progressive society;
- 7) Establishing a fully caring society;
- 8) Ensuring an economically just society, in which there is a fair and equitable distribution of the wealth of the nation;
- 9) Establishing a prosperous society with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient.

Two of the nine challenges, the fourth and fifth, are particularly pertinent to the creation of a cosmopolitan society and cosmopolitan sentiments extending beyond the nation and strengthened within the nation. The fourth of the nine challenges refers to *“the challenge of establishing a fully moral and ethical society, whose citizens are strong in religious and spiritual values and imbued with the highest of ethical standards”* while the fifth is *“the challenge of establishing a matured, liberal and tolerant society in which Malaysians of all colours and creeds are free to practise and profess their customs, cultures and religious beliefs and yet feeling that they belong to one nation”* (The Way Forward, 1991).

There was no mention of cosmopolitan or cosmopolitanism in these challenges. However, what is laid out in Dr Mahathir’s Vision 2020 could have alluded to the

creation of a cosmopolitan Malaysian society with moral and ethics of the highest standards, visualising a future where everyone see themselves as *Bangsa Malaysia* living in harmony; a society where cultural and religious differences should not be obstacles to a peaceful nation, suggesting cosmopolitanism within the country and among the ethnic groups<sup>7</sup>. The progress of the New Malay is a prerequisite to a *Bangsa Malaysia* and to achieve the targets of Vision 2020. In his speech on The Way Forward, he clearly states the imperative of pushing the New Malay to an (economic) standard on a par with other ethnic groups; failure to achieve this will drag other groups and the nation down. This group of New Malay is at the core of his *Bangsa Malaysia*.

### **2.3. Cosmopolitan ‘New Malay’ – Literature Review**

#### **2.3.1. Souchou Yao’s Particular and National Cosmopolitanism**

Using the group New Malay, proposed by Dr Mahathir for the educated professional middle class Malays who through education and occupation has successfully improved their socio-economic status, Yao perceives their ‘mental revolution’ as informed by cosmopolitan sensibilities. He contends this group of educated, middle class Malays are cosmopolitans. The New Malay could potentially reduce the tension between the ethnic groups in the country, directly or indirectly.

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<sup>7</sup> The Vision 2020 Dr Mahathir proposes was appropriated by his successors. Former Prime Minister Ahmad Badawi for instance proposes *Islam Hadhari* (implementation of principles of Islam derived from Al-Quran to govern the country) and current Prime Minister Najib Razak through his 1Malaysia ideology (bringing all Malaysian together regardless of their ethnicity in the creation of one Malaysia).

Directly by levelling their economic progress to the others, hence creating a more equal standing in the economy and removing the earlier dissatisfaction associated with economic disparities and poverty. Indirectly through what Yao called the nascent sensibilities, the structure of feelings the New Malay developed towards the plights other ethnic groups are in, because of the privileges and race-based policies that have been very accommodating to one ethnic group alone, the Malays, while discriminating against the rest. This group exhibits what he calls particular and national cosmopolitanism, through the criticisms they directed towards their own *Bumiputera* (Sons of the Soil) privileges that maintain preferential treatment of Malay Malaysians over Chinese and Indian Malaysians, in terms of politics and economy. The *Bumiputera* (Sons of the Soil) privileges work hand in hand with the NEP 1971, to preserve the special position of the Malays in the country, as per agreements made during the dawn of their independence from the British. This social contract, between the Malaysian founding leaders and the British colonial power, states that by giving the Chinese and Indians rights to citizenship in the country the Malays, the *Bumiputera* (Sons of the Soil) are to be given special rights and privileges to protect their political dominance over the country and to be allocated quotas and other economic privileges to boost their economic status as explained in the previous section. This contract has created the contemporary economic, cultural and political landscape of Malaysian society. Although the word *Bumiputera* (Sons of the Soil) is not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution, Article 153 (Reservation of quotas in respect of services, permits, etc., for Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak) clearly emphasises the safeguarding of the Malay's interests and privileges as shown below:



153. (1) It shall be the responsibility of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to safeguard the special position of the Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak and the legitimate interests of other communities in accordance with the provisions of this Article.

(2) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, but subject to the provisions of Article 40 and of this Article, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong shall exercise his functions under this Constitution and federal law in such manner as may be necessary to safeguard the special position of the Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak and to ensure the reservation for Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak of such proportion as he may deem reasonable of positions in the public service (other than the public service of a State) and of scholarships, exhibitions and other similar educational or training privileges or special facilities given or accorded by the Federal Government and, when any permit or license for the operation of any trade or business is required by federal law, then, subject to the provisions of that law and this Article, of such permits and licenses.

(Source: Constitution of Malaysia, 1963, also formerly known as the Constitution of the Federation of Malaya 1957. Emphasis (underlined) by this thesis's author).

It is against these privileges that the New Malay, according to Yao, expressed their dissatisfaction and created what he calls the particular cosmopolitanism, through the breaking down of the antagonism between the Malays and the Chinese (p.212). He justifies the use of particular cosmopolitanism for the “rupture of the obsessive communalism that has traditionally defined Malay nationalism” and that “the imperceptible realisation (by the New Malay) that

ethnic binary no longer provides, in these days, the appropriate strategy for expressing their new understanding of their way in the world” (p. 221). What he demonstrates here is the particular (specific) focus of the cosmopolitanism, directed to specific issues experienced by the New Malay. It demonstrates their self-distantiation from ethnic identity and its privileges, which is similar to cosmopolitan analysis, in other studies, that focuses on self-distantiation and self-reflection (Delanty, 2006; Delanty, 2009; Iqtidar, 2012). This signifies the new kind of thinking of the New Malay, the mental revolution and the New Malay as a metaphor.

### **2.3.2. Terence Chong’s Islam and Cosmopolitanism**

Cosmopolitanism was not directly addressed in this paper as Chong was writing about the histories, intricacies and future of the New Malay, emphasising the context of religion (*Islam Hadhari* ideology introduced by Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) in economic development as the approach to envisioning the future of the New Malay and its journey towards Vision 2020. However his discussion of *Islam Hadhari* and New Malay that is located in the context of capitalism, globalisation and the localisation process brings out a cosmopolitan perspective that is one of *Islam Hadhari’s* strengths<sup>8</sup>. Despite being an ideology imposing Islam upon Malaysia’s multicultural society, it uses Islamic ethics and principles that emphasise peace, tolerance and justice to reach out to all Malaysians, Muslim and non-Muslim. According to Chong (2003: 581) “Islam Hadhari is a

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<sup>8</sup> Its strength is also seen as a problem because of its over-emphasis on Islam as guidance in a multicultural society, with different religions and sets of beliefs. This *Islam Hadhari* was perceived by many (including scholars) as an attempt to strengthen Malay dominance and hence was perceived as un-cosmopolitan.

discourse that localised global capitalism and modernity by accommodating, even encouraging, the necessary socio-political conditions for their growth through a specific exegesis of Islam". This *Islam Hadhari* that proposed progressive Islam, with its principles, allowed the New Malay to "straddle between the local and the global" (p. 582) keeping local cultures, practices and Islam strong, while navigating the global economic spaces by 1) global-local synthesis of capitalism for the purpose of serving the best interests of the New Malays; 2) prioritising Islam to state interest and 3) allowing cosmopolitan perspectives to develop based on the ethics and principles of Islam. This third point is where Chong expresses his take on cosmopolitan New Malay within the context of *Islam Hadhari*. He sees *Islam Hadhari* creating a flexible space that allows the New Malay to perform their "skills and competence in manoeuvring between cosmopolitan and national identities" (p. 584), seeing no reason why national identities and cosmopolitanism cannot co-exist. In this context, the New Malay acts "as a site of multiple identities and cosmopolitan tastes" (p.585). What *Islam Hadhari* and Chong's approach to cosmopolitanism implies, is a form of Muslim cosmopolitanism which other scholars, such as Humeira Iqtidar (2009, 2010, 2012), Magnus Marsden (2007, 2008) and Bryan Turner (2010, 2011, 2012), have researched extensively.

### **2.3.3. Joel Kahn's Modernity and Cosmopolitanism**

Kahn's approach to cosmopolitanism in Malaysia differs from Yao and Chong, who focused their attention on a specific Malay group whilst assessing particular issues and Islam within a cosmopolitan analysis. Kahn takes a broader

approach by placing the discussion of Malay Malaysian cosmopolitanism within the debate of the modern Malay World's transmigrations, nationalism and modernity<sup>9</sup>. He problematises the detachment between state and society in researching cosmopolitanism, as these two are inseparable in a way that transformations and development of one of these are intertwined, as they have been in the past. The context of Malay nationalism must be included to understand the cosmopolitanism that arises, what is currently exhibited, is a form of national albeit 'limited kind of cosmopolitanism' (2006: 165). What is interesting in his analysis are the already present Malay Muslim cosmopolitans, marked by hybridity and openness to change and development. Using the work of P. Ramlee and his Malay films, Kahn has shown that Malaysia was actually cosmopolitan during that period of decolonisation and nation building. Its cosmopolitan sensibility was apparent through a film '*Penarik Beca*' (Tricksaw Driver) and in the process of making the film; most parts of the film exhibit openness and a harmonious multi-ethnic society. *Penarik Beca* was a film created in the midst of decolonising Malaysia, an attempt to portray the difference between local and the western influence. Western influences were seen (by the Malays in general) as a negative, while the local identities were to be preserved by the society. What seems to be ironic in this film is that the essence itself is a mixture of western and local, a hybridisation of both that created multicultural societal elements. The film was directed by an Indian director, yet the influence came from Hollywood, which shows how different

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<sup>9</sup> Modern Malay World a term he used to refer to 'a fairly extensive region encompassing the relatively sparsely populated areas of intensive commercial exploitation by large number of immigrant peoples from the region, other parts of Asia (notably China and South Asia) and Europe' (2008: 261).

groups could be brought together and were able to accept and understand their differences. P. Ramlee, the main actor in the film, is himself not a pure Malaysian Malay but Malay from the Sumatran region. This, on its own, shows that an individual like P. Ramlee is already a cosmopolitan, being able to bridge his Sumatran identity and embrace a Malaysian Malay identity. Kahn, however, cautions against directly attaching hybridity to cosmopolitanism; rather he suggests that it can, but not necessarily does, create cosmopolitan sensibilities. Presence of hybridity in the Malay world nevertheless provides a space for further (future) cosmopolitanism. In a later paper Kahn (2008) provided a discussion on grounded cosmopolitanism in the Malay world, demonstrating abstractly the cosmopolitan Malay based on socio-cultural and religious grounds. He speaks of a new Malaysian Muslim who “is global in outlook, hostile to tradition in all its guises, universalising in aspiration, favourably disposed towards entrepreneurship, the accumulation of wealth and conspicuous consumption, and generally very comfortable with the latest technology” (2008: 265) and that within this group of new Malaysian Muslims there is a specific “New Muslim sensibility (that) encompasses the view that economic success, the accumulation of wealth and consumption are not only not contrary to Islam but are positively enjoined by it; the keenness with which Muslims, and Muslims activists in particular, seek to make use of ‘newly available media technologies [which] impinge on and possibly transform existing practices of mediation between the divine and the human world’; the emergence among Malaysian Muslims of new, delocalised community imaginations beyond ‘the space of the ethnic group or nation’” (2008: 264).

Such Muslims, as described, reject traditional, fundamental Islam and accept a progressive Islam that is inclusive and wishing to create an Islamic state.

Intriguingly this description of the new Muslim resembles very much the new breed of Malay Dr Mahathir spoke of in 1991. Nothing of this “New Malay” was mentioned in his work but the characteristics they have are similar. For instance, Dr Mahathir’s speech that was presented earlier (refer to Page 25-26) refers to a group of Muslim Malay who worked hard to stabilise their economy, while at the same time ensuring their Islamic identity is being further solidified during this contemporary period. This group creates a new form of cosmopolitanism in Malaysia based on Islamic teachings and practice. In this case, this new Malaysian Muslim, that Kahn described, is Dr Mahathir’s New Malay. In this situation, where Islam and cosmopolitanism are both present, he did not see the problem of developing both concurrently, as the former exhibits cosmopolitanism in its belief and practices, which is similar to Chong’s analysis of the *Islam Hadhari ideology*.

## **2.4. Revisiting the Cosmopolitan ‘New Malay’**

### **2.4.1. Cosmopolitan Actors – Malay Malaysian Students**

There are a number of components of these earlier New Malay cosmopolitanism analyses that this thesis takes issue with. First, it takes issue with the limited scope of the actors labelled as cosmopolitan. Whilst not denying the importance of the

earlier work and the contribution provided by connecting the label cosmopolitan to the original group of Malay Malaysians within Dr Mahathir's New Malay, that is the middle class professional, this group however problematically resembles the elitist approach to characterising cosmopolitans. This attachment to privileged groups was critiqued within cosmopolitanism studies for its exclusivity (Clifford, 1992; Marsden, 2007; Glick Schiller, 2011) although the general cosmopolitanism discourse continues to see the connection made between a privileged, educated professional group (including transnational migrants' experiences for economic or education purposes) and cosmopolitanism in different areas of study. This thesis author does not deny the potential contribution of both economic activities and education to cosmopolitanism (as shown in other research such as Waters, 2005; Huang and Yeoh, 2005). However, there can be other potential cosmopolitans among the Malaysians, specifically (international) students who, through their experiences while studying overseas can potentially become cosmopolitans, experiencing 'mental revolution' and can therefore contribute to their country's development. This is the group that this thesis proposes to include in its analysis of Malay Malaysian online cosmopolitanism, although this researcher does not assume that they are ready-made cosmopolitans, solely due to their international travel and higher education.

Notwithstanding the elitist view this selection may have created, and that it mirrors many other studies of cosmopolitanism that privilege mobile, transnational subjects as cosmopolitan actors (Yeoh, 2000; Ong, 1999) this research takes a step back from equating mobility to cosmopolitan creation, as has been previously

emphasised. The selection of students as potential cosmopolitans is not simply because of their pursuit of internationally recognised educational accreditation, which will eventually lead in most if not all cases to economic stability and security resembling that of Dr Mahathir's New Malay. It is also due to their lived experiences while being away from home, navigating a new life in an unfamiliar and strange land (offline and online) and because of the potential contribution this particular group and research could provide to Malaysian academic and public discourse as well as to the existing body of knowledge. The selection of Malay Malaysian students in this research, together with its proposal to acknowledge them as potential cosmopolitan actors, is based on the understanding and acceptance that students have untapped potential; within the context of this research, a potential for cosmopolitan self-development that will eventually be a valuable asset to their country. It is this latter potential self-transformation experience (specifically online interactions) that this research focuses on – the potential creation of cosmopolitan Malay Malaysian students grounded in their everyday online experience.

This group of youth, students, is rarely the point of interest when the *immediate* fate and progress of a country is discussed in the open. Some individuals only see this group of students as potential economic actors after their graduation and formal entry to the professional sectors (for economic development), which is probably the reason for the extension of the age group of youth to include 15 – 40; a significant difference from the United Nation's age categorisation, that recognises youth as those between ages 18 – 25. In 2011, the former Youth and Sports



Minister, Datuk Seri Ahmad Shabery Cheek, announced the plan to change the age categorisation of Malaysian youth to 15 – 25 in the National Policy Youth draft. He had hoped that the change would encourage young people to be more active and assume leadership positions in the country. However, this plan was not accepted wholeheartedly by a group of individuals (government officials), who do not see that this new group is ready to be the country's leaders, as well as suggesting that such young people are still exam-oriented (Lim, 2011). This latter response to the younger age group of youth suggests the lack of confidence this critical group of individuals has regarding these students, a reservation which is probably valid when examined in relation to economic progress and development. However, this younger group of youth could potentially support the country's development in other ways such as through social progress prior to their economic contribution. This brings us back to the mental revolution discussed earlier and Yao's new structure of feeling that the New Malay exhibits. It could be this new way of thinking and feeling that the young could contribute to the social progress of their multicultural nation, which this research aims to explore through their online interactions.

The potential of students (including international students) has been acknowledged in the growing studies on youth, focusing on different aspects of their lives; not just economic but also socio-cultural such as Langley and Breese (2005), Doherty and Singh (2005), Marginson (2009), Fincher (2011), and Skrbiš, Woodward and Bean, (2014) on the social transformation mobility and education have brought to the international students. The social transformation includes personal enrichment,

wider job prospects and awareness of cultural others going beyond own cultural contexts. Mobile youth (including students) has been acknowledged to provide substantial contributions to their country, economically and socially. The latter, in this case, includes cosmopolitan creation. This group, that travels to other countries in search of better educational accreditation and life experiences, to expand their social network and to learn new languages, especially that of the host country, has been acknowledged in a number of studies as cosmopolitan. However, they are not often represented in cosmopolitanism studies *per se*, which tend to direct their attention to economic migrants (privileged or less privileged, elite or non-elite), as well as tourists, as cosmopolitan actors (Yeoh, 2004; Kothari, 2008; Ye and Kelly, 2011).

Other study themes (such as International Education and Cross Cultural studies) that do focus on this group of peripatetic youths have looked at international students' experiences (especially educational) overseas in order to assess their cross cultural competence, identity politics, middle-class economic strategies and the potential creation of global cosmopolitanism (Lewthwaite, 1996; Dolby and Rizvi, 2007; Fincher, 2011). The number of empirical studies conducted by academics on Asian international students has mushroomed, especially in Australasia. Their focus on international students' overseas experiences is wide-ranging and includes not only identity construction, development and cross cultural competencies, but has also expanded into examining these students' strategic educational planning, in relation to their imagined career trajectories in liquid

times<sup>10</sup> (Doherty and Singh, 2005). These internationally mobile students are of interest to academics, policy makers and educators because of their potential in 'producing the new conditions for their lives' (Dolby and Rizvi, 2007: 5), particularly because they are creating changes that will shape the character of the contemporary world. The cosmopolitan characteristics created among these international students are seen as an outcome of physical movements and designed education curricula<sup>11</sup>, which help to create individuals who, in turn, may help to improve the economic and social conditions of their societies, wherever they come from.

What these investigations have demonstrated is the social, cultural and economic potential students (in this case international students) could generate that could benefit themselves, their society and their countries within their own socio-cultural and religious contexts, and that therefore they should not be overlooked. Because of this lack of interest in international students in the New Malay cosmopolitanism analysis, this thesis argues for and intends to include this group as potential cosmopolitan actors, considering their growing involvement in their society's social lives. They, as a group of youth, have been proven by the aforementioned studies to be cosmopolitan in their own right, a condition that is largely influenced by the agenda they set prior to travelling to other countries and by their overseas experiences (Singh and Doherty, 2008). This, however, does not assume the automatic creation of cosmopolitanism (Skrbiš and Woodward, 2007; Roudometof,

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<sup>10</sup> The term Zygmunt Bauman gives to contemporary time which is characterised by fluidity of social identity and communal attachments.

<sup>11</sup> Cosmopolitan educational curricula are seen by some scholars in particular Martha Nussbaum (1996) and Simon Marginson (2009) as a way to create cosmopolitans.

2012; Snee, 2013) among mobile youth seeking international education accreditation. As Delanty (2012: 3) reminds us, cosmopolitanism concerns ways of imagining the world, and thus it is more than just a condition of mobility or transnational movement. Skrbiš and Woodward (2007: 733) assert of globalisation that it 'does not guarantee the uptake or expression of cosmopolitan dispositions, but surely provides much of the raw material for its possibility'. There is evidence from other studies, which document students who became less cosmopolitan or did not experience any changes at all (Fincher, 2011). This experience, of becoming less or more cosmopolitan, indicates the temporal aspects of cosmopolitanism, an aspect which is highlighted throughout this thesis.

#### **2.4.2. Everyday Cosmopolitanism**

Yao, Chong and Kahn's approaches to cosmopolitanism were based on Malaysia's on-going<sup>12</sup> ethnic tensions, caused by political and economic situations since the post-colonial period; thus the current analysis of cosmopolitanism in the context of Malay Malaysians is restricted to issues specific to politics and economics. What this thesis argues for is the broadening of the scope of the analysis and a move away from boxing cosmopolitan analysis within these issues, so opening the debate to other possible ordinary everyday cosmopolitan experiences which have been identified in the work of cosmopolitan scholars during the last decade (Lamont and Aksartova, 2002; Kendall and Woodward, 2004; Iqtidar, 2009; Iqtidar, 2012;

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<sup>12</sup> Ethnic tension between the three main races, Malay, Chinese and Indian, seems to have lessened over time but remains a potential threat to the country's social cohesion and harmony.

Anderson, 2004; Pieterse, 2006; Skrbiž and Woodward, 2007; Jeffrey and McFarlane, 2008). What their work, in a nutshell, suggests is that cosmopolitan sensibilities might not have developed through bigger political and economic issues or projects, but rather through everyday interactions with cultural others; through such activities unexpected sensibilities could be acquired. Iqtidar (2012) found that the group she was studying *tabligh ja'maat* found their cosmopolitan sensibilities outside of organised dialogues and projects. It was through their everyday interactions with people in close proximity, such as those sharing the same apartment building like the women in her study, that they developed a sense of openness to cultural others. Similarly Lamont and Aksartova (2002) found that their participants' discursive resources to tackle racism came from their everyday interactions, happenings and experiences such as economic stability and money (market arguments), human similarities and being a good individual who respects others. They explicate the potential of encountering cosmopolitanising experiences outside the bounded restrictive projects. This emphasises the difference between everyday cosmopolitanism and those cosmopolitanism based on strict economic or political issues and those aimed to be developed through organised projects. The former approach should open cosmopolitanism researcher up to other potential sources of sensibilities and social interactions. In the case of the Malay students, their everyday interactions with cultural others online and offline in the United Kingdom rather than just the specific political and economic issues within Malaysia.

Although this thesis argues for the retreat from economic and political aspects in this cosmopolitanism analysis, it acknowledges the influence both have upon the

character of Malaysian society. The current landscape of the nation and its society is a product of the intricately linked past and current economic, political and socio-cultural processes within the broader process of nationalism and modernity. Therefore, it is imperative that such processes must be taken into account in any analysis of Malaysian progress. As Kahn (2006: 173) rightly emphasised “to treat the Malay(si)an state and the divisions within the Malay(si)an society as unrelated, generic entities in this way is misleading because...it fails to explain why Malay(si)an pluralism took the form that it did”. Nevertheless, this thesis argues for looking beyond the aforementioned contexts to include other social experiences and interactions. This group of student youths is physically away from their home country, residing in a country whose societies are different from their own, creating a different socio-cultural environment for them. In terms of online presence, as it allegedly connects more people than offline, online communication creates complex sets of environments and contexts. It has also been noted in other studies that online sites have been used to manage long-distance relationships (Wilding, 2006; Madianou and Miller, 2011) which resulted to the presence of the offline ‘away’ network in the online site context (Zhao et al., 2008) therefore creating the environment similar to what the user might have back home in Malaysia.

Both the offline ‘away’ and online environment draws different sets of social skills and behaviours to manoeuvre and manage the diversities, and that could possibly create a different form of cosmopolitanism than what was presented by Yao, Chong and Kahn in the context of Malay society in Malaysia. Social network sites, such as Facebook, have been known to allow identity (re)construction and expression;

therefore they can become a site for these Malay students to construct, contest and express their identity in ways different from when they were at *home*. Thus the online space becomes an interesting and significant area in which to explore their individual experiences that might have contributed to their identity (re)constructions, and allowing for everyday-defined identity to be created, as distinct from the authority-defined identity<sup>13</sup> (Shamsul, 2001), so shaping new types of mentality and sensibilities. In this light, this research questions what form of cosmopolitanism are created in this away from home and online contexts and from their everyday online and offline social interactions and experiences.

#### **2.4.3. Cosmopolitanism Research Agenda – Online Experience**

The New Malay's cosmopolitan experiences, as described by scholars, are based on those academics' observations of the situation, not the actual experience *expressed* by the individuals themselves. Their observations and analyses, despite providing good background and general understanding of the current and potential cosmopolitan sensibilities developed among the Malay Malaysians, especially this New Malay group, are inadequate if we are to understand the individual experiences. In response to the second and third issues, this thesis argues for the inclusions of individuals' everyday experiences, to explore the issues and aspects

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<sup>13</sup> Here I borrow the term 'Authority-defined' Identity and 'Everyday-defined' Identity to refer to the identity or the ideas of the New Malays (Authority-defined) and the identity that the people themselves create and negotiate based on everyday experience online (Everyday-defined). The terms was introduced by Shamsul A.B (2001: 365) to refer to 1) reality that is authoritatively defined by people who are part of the dominant power structure ('Authority-defined' reality) and 2) reality experienced by the people in their daily life (the 'Everyday-defined' reality).

that matter to them through a specific research model designed to obtain information that is relevant to studying their potential cosmopolitan experiences. This brings back the earlier point made on the importance of including online social interactions of this group of youth, in order to obtain information that is more grounded in everyday experiences and social interactions. Their physical mobility, their online presence and their use of all-encompassing new social media can contribute to the growth of cosmopolitan sensibilities, and because of this it is imperative to understand what it means to be a “mobile youth” today; that is, in a world and period laden with new social media and digital technologies that shape how young people act and interact daily. Therefore this thesis acknowledges the need to study online cosmopolitanism that has surprisingly only received minimal attention within cosmopolitanism studies and Malaysian cosmopolitanism discourse, considering the growing use of the Internet by Malaysians and the expansion in diversities of the user base, as well as the purposes as presented in national statistics.

In 2012, the Survey of Malaysian Youth Opinion <sup>14</sup> reported that Malaysian youth in general is “informed and wired”. There has been a drop in the percentage of youth not accessing Internet from 67% in 2007 to only 2% in 2012, indicating the rise in importance of the Internet in their daily lives. The Internet is used for communication, seeking information and entertainment; 65% of the respondents

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<sup>14</sup> The survey was conducted on socio-culture (national identity, religion, family values, healthcare and physical activities), economics (personal finance, jobs and education, aspiration for mobility, views on the economy) and politics (views on issues of public interest, perception on the direction of the country, political participation, youth as agents of change, views on policies and governance). The survey covered 2105 respondents between 17 – 35 years.



used the Internet for social networking<sup>15</sup> (see Appendix 6, page 330). This data supports the proposal to include their online interactions in the Malay Malaysian students' cosmopolitanism analysis. To support this claim on the importance of youth online interactions and engagements, the subsequent sections in this chapter present some examples on the use of social network sites by youth, as well as discussing the potential of social media for cultivating cosmopolitan sensibilities.

## **2.5. Youth Online Interactions and Engagements**

Seeing the growth in studies of youth online interactions that focus on particular topics and issues such as a specific use of social media, processes of identity formation and expression (Zhao et al., 2008; Stald, 2008; Stern, 2008), self-presentation (Chen and Marcus, 2012; Rui and Stefanone, 2012), and building social capital (Ellison et al., 2011; Vitak et al., 2011) which could all inform cosmopolitanism, it is a surprise that studies on cosmopolitanism have been slow to include social media, such as social network sites, that have become part of the individual youth's everyday life. Interactions that were predominantly conducted offline have been extended into the online spaces. In studies on new media and online social interactions in general, these online mediated spaces are no longer conceptualised as spaces detached from offline, everyday experiences. It has become an avenue for everyday social interactions; an extension of the offline; and an everyday space. These spaces are equally as important as offline spaces in

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<sup>15</sup> The definition of social networking in this survey is not clear. It does not indicate whether it involves maintenance of already established social relationships offline, using online sites, or if it refers to creating and building new social relationships online.

cultivating cosmopolitan sensibilities. They could provide more discursive resources to draw from, in order to create cosmopolitans and associated cosmopolitanism due to its features and infrastructures that allow multiple forms of interactions that transcend physical locations and current offline social reach and networks. As Calhoun (2003: 537) has written “differential resources give people differential capacities to reach beyond particular belongings to other social connections – including very broad ones like nations, civilizations, or humanity as a whole”. Online spaces could be this other resource that extends the user beyond the confines of one’s current connection, thus having huge potential for facilitating social interactions that could develop cosmopolitan sensibilities.

Media, as defined by Silverstone (2007: 5):

“the mass, the globalized, the regional, the national, the local, the personal media; the broadcast and interactive media; the audio and audio-visual and the printed media; the electronic and the mechanical, the digital and the analogue media; the big screen and the small screen media; the dominant and alternative media; the fixed and the mobile, the convergent and the stand alone media”

Silverstone has described what has become the mediator between subjects and audiences. Media creates a space that allows information to be sent, received and (potentially) reflected by audiences; a space filled with images, narratives and representations of others creating imagined worlds (Appadurai, 1996). With regards to cosmopolitanism, two levels of processes can be laid out: the macro level and the micro level. In the former, media can be used to create a sense of the world’s

'unity in diversity' through representations of societal plurality, differences and sameness (Delanty, 2009), while at the micro level, media emphasises individuals' creativity in producing content specific to their own subjectivities and experiences.

Robertson (2010, 2012) and Caglar (2012) using empirical data, demonstrated the potential media (news and corporate advertisement respectively) has in cultivating cosmopolitanism. Robertson (2012) discusses the cosmopolitanising potential of media, both new and established. For her, media actors (journalists) play a great role in processes of cosmopolitanism. Awareness and exposure to distant others through television, news reporting and presumably through the absorption of different selves is how one's cosmopolitan outlook is enhanced. It is the imagination one conjures that is powerful in empathising with others and this is made possible through media. Such communication is not a direct engagement but a distant one, as an active audience creating the cosmopolitan outlook or the civic cosmopolitanism. As Urry (2000) writes (cited in Szerszynski and Urry, 2002: 470) "contemporary cosmopolitanism has developed in and through imaginative travel through the TV", suggesting the potential these types of macro-scale media (news and advertisement) have in cultivating cosmopolitan sensibilities. Mass media has been used significantly by the Malaysian government in creating an impression of a harmonious multicultural Malaysia,<sup>16</sup> for example through national songs<sup>17</sup> aired

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<sup>16</sup> As a person living next door to Malaysia and growing up watching Malaysian channels such as RTM1, RTM2, RTM3 and the new Astro Channels, their television programmes and advertisements did influence my perception of the country and led me to believe that there is a strong ethnic harmony in the country. My impression suggests the potential reach it has in creating that sense of unity in diversity in Malaysia to some extent.

every now and then between television programmes. Advertisements are shown about each ethnic groups' special celebrations, such as *Hari Raya Aidilfitri*, Chinese New Year and Deepavali, which emphasise social interaction and respect between the main ethnic groups; these are particular and specific advertisements that target all ethnic groups by highlighting ethnic diversity, harmony and unity. However, the degree of acceptance of these aforementioned efforts by the individuals from different ethnic groups, and the cultivation of cosmopolitanism, is unclear. What this demonstrates is the deployment of a multicultural agenda, through official channels, to maintain a harmonious society.

Social network sites, which can be both macro and micro, have been used intensively and extensively by youth. Active youth (including mobile youth) engagement with digital media is clearly shown by the exponential increase in their use of new social media, such as Facebook and Twitter. These new social media are used for a whole host of purposes; for instance, connecting, building relationships, maintenance of family relationships and political engagement. It is not difficult to find evidence of their pervasiveness, behavioural evidence which could easily be mislabelled as an obsessive use of new social media. A number of recent examples of effective use of new social media to disseminate information among young people are shown here to prove the point. First, the organisation of the August 2011 summer riots in England via Twitter and Facebook. Newspapers covered the story with titles such as 'England's Summer of Disorder'. The magnitude of the

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<sup>17</sup> Such as "Satu Malaysia" (One Malaysia) which was created for "People First, Performance Concept" competition (one of the concepts in 1Malaysia) by Mr. Anuar Razak, the Director and Head of Limkokwing Sound and Music Academy.

chaos caused by the riots was increased by the use of social network sites (SNSs) such as Twitter<sup>18</sup>. The violence that started in London soon spread to other cities: Manchester, Birmingham, Nottingham, Wolverhampton and Gloucester.

Second, scholars such as Wu (2009), Johnson et al., (2011), and Kaye (2011) have shown other emerging possibilities of SNSs used in online political engagement, such as those exemplified by Barack Obama's first successful United States presidential campaign: the campaign used social networking to gain the support of young voters, who are the dominant demographic group online. SNSs have also been influential in 'building a politically conscious civil society' in the Middle East (Davis, 2011). Facebook, for instance, was influential in the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt.

Third, an example specific to mobile Malaysian youth was the successful coordination of the Bersih 3.0 rally in cities across the globe (in Australia, East Asian countries, Europe, North America, other Southeast Asian countries, and the Middle East). A Facebook community page with the tagline *'Join the global movement for Clean and Fair elections in Malaysia. Join or start an event in your city now'* was created to disseminate the Bersih rally missions – a clean electoral roll, freedom of speech in mainstream media, and the elimination of dirty politics. The third rally, planned for and initiated in Kuala Lumpur on 28 April 2012, was a follow-up to the 2007 and 2011 rallies. Malaysians all over the world were called to get involved in

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<sup>18</sup> Although recent research has found that online sites have also been used to help organised cleaning campaigns, post-riot.

their own Bersih 3.0 rally in the country they were currently residing in. A number of Bersih 3.0 Facebook events for major cities in the United Kingdom including London, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Manchester and Nottingham, were also created. Malaysian youth made use of this social networking site and took advantage of the support it offered their agenda. Pages, cover photos, events, and profile pictures were used strategically to disseminate information relevant to Bersih 3.0. Another recent example of Facebook use is the *Jom Balik Undi* (Let's Go Home to Vote) community page on Facebook for annual voting purposes. "*We are Malaysians who love our country. There are many reasons why we are where we are but no matter where we are, we still call Malaysia home. We want to fly home to vote. Jom Balik Undi! Let's Go Home to Vote!*" tagline written on the About page to describe what it is about. These three examples, a small number of activities that are representing numerous activities that are occurring on Facebook, should demonstrate the extensive use of a social network site; in this case Facebook. The site is also used for personal purposes such as sharing of daily activities, uploading photos, connecting with others far or near, home or away. This demonstrates the emerging possibilities new media can create for societies in this "digital age". The above examples show not only youth's active engagement in and with new media, but also the possibilities new media have brought to individuals living far away from home, highlighting that physical absence is no longer a hindrance to involvement, exposure and information-seeking. Internet access, coupled with new social media affordances,<sup>19</sup> can support multiple avenues for individual cosmopolitanising

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<sup>19</sup> Affordances here refer to technical features, settings and infrastructure that allow specific forms of activities; for example synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous

experiences. Other studies have shown how digital media have been used to communicate with families back home (Wilding, 2006; Madianou and Miller, 2011; Hjorth, 2012) and that an individual's physical absence can, to a certain extent, be replaced by their significant online presence (Licoppe and Smoreda, 2005). This, as mentioned earlier, allows the context in the offline space to be brought online, highlighting that the social, and political (and possibly to some extent economic) context offline can play a role in shaping the cultivation of the users' cosmopolitan sensibilities online. Facebook, on its own, has received quite astonishing attention in academia, so that now the literature focused on this one social network site is substantial. The interest in Facebook emanates from Communication and Media studies, Marketing and Advertising, Psychology, Computing, Education, Anthropology, and Sociology to name a few areas from which people are researching the emerging patterns of usage, issues, and potential of the site. There are several themes explored within this expanding literatures about Facebook: among them are self and identity (identity exploration, presentation of self, self-disclosure and self-censorship); social networking (maintenance of relationship, building social capital); affordances and infrastructure (including issue of privacy in relation to the site's features and settings).

The examples presented above justify the interest from the academic world in youth's engagement with the new media. At present youth interactions and socialisation are mediated by technological developments such as mobile phones,

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(delayed-time) interactions made possible by the infrastructure of a site that allow information to be left (and remain there until deleted) and attended to later when the recipient wishes to.

the Internet, televisions and (one that has recently risen in importance) new social media – social networking sites. We can see in academic (as well as public) discourse how prevalent the use of new social media and digital technologies are in the present day; therefore, any analysis of individual interactions, without considering online interactions as well, is simply inadequate to provide an understanding of their daily individual and social experiences. According to France, (2007: 157) '(y)outh culture is seeing a 'meshing' of the local, the traditional, and the global as ways of being creative in cultural practice. New technologies open the window to 'new' worlds and understandings that are shaping how youth construct themselves as 'cultural''. Thus the creation of youth culture online should and must be studied in order to understand the dynamics of this particular group: their experiences, identity constructions and expressions online (also expressed by others such as Buckingham, 2008; and Stern, 2008), as well as the ways new media and digital technologies are altering the youths traditional ways of socialising. As youth are the main users of new media, especially social networking sites such as Facebook, the interest in youth online activities and ensuing experiences is no surprise. It is particularly emphasised in this research on Malay Malaysian cosmopolitanism, as this research questions how the cosmopolitanism of this group developed and the discursive resources that the students draw from their everyday online interactions.



## 2.6. Revisiting Rooted Cosmopolitanism?

Earlier sections of this chapter have introduced the new breed of Malay Malaysians that emerged sometime towards the end of the twentieth century; a product of the affirmative action policy NEP that was drafted in 1971, following the race riot in Malaysia in 1969. This group of New Malay, made up of middle class professionals, has received considerable attention for their impressive economic growth and the change in their mentality, which according to Dr Mahathir, represents a 'mental revolution', a new way of thinking that is geared towards positivity and economic progress. Due to their success they have been labelled as cosmopolitan in its narrowest sense for their new urban appearance, education and professional occupations (Harper, 1996; Thompson, 2003), but also in a deeper sense because of the empathy they show towards other ethnic groups who did not receive the same privileges as they did (Yao, 2003). This section went on to discuss the approaches taken by a number of Malaysian scholars to study this group's cosmopolitanism and general Malaysian society's cosmopolitanism (Yao, 2003; Chong, 2005; and Kahn, 2006; Kahn, 2008); it problematises and extends these approaches by proposing an analysis of Malay Malaysian students everyday online interactions (on Facebook) to explore the potential cosmopolitan sensibilities that could develop in the site. This thesis acknowledges youth (students) as agents of change that can bring changes and development to their society and country, not just economically but socio-culturally, to improve the relationships between the main ethnic groups in the country and maintain harmonious multicultural (or cosmopolitan) society, as the government meticulously endeavours to do, with varying degrees of success.

Dr Mahathir's vision of Bangsa Malaysia and the cosmopolitanism analysis provided by Yao (2003), Chong (2005), and Kahn (2006, 2008) portray a specific type of Malaysian cosmopolitanism that is tied to processes (colonialism, independence, nationalism, economic development) that carve out a specific modernity which can be labelled as rooted, national, particular and grounded due to the strong attachment to ethnic (religious) and/or national identity. Almost always the analysis of cosmopolitanism, in the context of Malaysia and its society, seeks reconciliation between national and cosmopolitan, and nationalism and cosmopolitanism, presenting the possibilities of the nation and its society as grounded in the nation and at the same time exhibiting cosmopolitanism (a notion which is explicit in the Prime Ministers' speeches). All these communications taken together have created the concept of cosmopolitanism that is grounded within the nation, but with actors whose feelings are extendable beyond it, to include cultural others. This resembles many other situated, rooted models of cosmopolitanism, such as in the work of Anthony Kwame Appiah on Cosmopolitan Patriot and Rooted Cosmopolitanism; Humeira Iqtidar on Muslim Cosmopolitanism; Scott Malcolmson on Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism. This group of work developed from the dissatisfaction of the previous cosmopolitanism approach that celebrates rootlessness and detachment from a nation-state. Cosmopolitanism and nationalism need not be mutually exclusive or placed worlds apart, as Appiah rightly writes "the cosmopolitan patriot can entertain the possibility of a world in which everyone is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of his or her own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different, places that are home to

other, different, people” (1998: 91). How could one be both a cosmopolitan locally and globally? Appiah (1998 in Cheah and Robbins) in his work on *Cosmopolitan Patriots* showed that one could be rooted to where one was born and at the same time have a deep feeling for a place where one was brought up or is currently living. Using his own experience as Ghanaian born, living in Britain and America, he has deep sentiments for all these places and associates himself with all these places. His term ‘cosmopolitanism patriotism’ emphasised that one can still be a patriot (rooting for a nation) while being a cosmopolitan.

The earlier, abstract, normative, understanding of the concept “Citizen of the World” derived from the word *cosmo* and *polis*, which could be understood as “moral obligations owed to all human beings based solely on our humanity alone” (Brown and Held, 2010: 1), continues to be sculpted for more situated experiences such as those above. Within the last decade of the twentieth century, the field has seen the overabundance of academic work on the concept with different take. However, the loose concept was not accurate in describing certain social conditions of societies that experienced a solidifying of their ethnic and national identities, despite the globalising world allegedly eroding sovereignty of nation-states and the notion of belonging to and being attached to a nation. The neglect of culture, belonging and communities is examined by Calhoun (2003: 535), who was writing against new cosmopolitanism liberalism that pays no attention to social solidarity and culture. He argues for the inclusion of belonging and culture in the study and understanding of cosmopolitanism, as the absence of these factors, and by taking individuals solely on their own and only as citizens of a state, do not do justice to

their experiences; therefore, only an incomplete understanding of the people is provided. This elucidates his stance on particular, hybrid and empirically based cosmopolitanism.

From the beginning of the twenty-first century, cosmopolitanism found a new face with a more situated, grounded, discrepant, open to non-western experiences practical approach. The move from a normative approach to an empirically based, situated and grounded in everyday experiences approach is exemplified by the growing literature with a specific approach, resulting in a plethora of concepts and understanding of cosmopolitanism, such as may be found in the work of Lamont and Aksartova (2002); Vertovec and Cohen (2002); Skrbušić, Kendall and Woodward (2004); Anderson (2004); Pieterse (2006); Appiah (2006); Skrbušić and Woodward (2007); Jeffrey and McFarlane (2008), and Werbner (2006; 2008). After the immense contributions from many disciplines over the last two decades what some, if not many, scholars of cosmopolitanism have come to terms with is its versatility, its discrepant character that cannot be restricted to any singular condition but is open for interpretation and practice. This may seem to suggest that the study is not going anywhere, because of the growing empirical work producing ever more examples of contexts to prove varieties of (non-western) cosmopolitanism, to the point that “we end up with a diversity of cosmopolitan cultures or a counter-western cosmopolitanism” (Delanty, 2012: 5). Delanty (2012: 5) suggests a way forward in this situation of overabundance of cosmopolitanism work; that is to “locate the cosmopolitan imaginary as an orientation or self-understanding that exists within all world cultures, while taking a diversity of historical forms” to

understand the expanding human experience. The vast quantity of literature also suggests four aspects of cosmopolitanism: temporalised, contextualised, spatialised and individualised, dimensions which also run through this thesis.

The Malaysian cosmopolitanism, as described earlier, indicated experiences that are specific to their modernity and that have resulted in rooted, Muslim cosmopolitanism. This however, cannot be generalised to other ethnic groups in the country who could have a different form of cosmopolitanism. This rooted, Muslim approach is only for the group of Malay those scholars have studied. Contemporary Malaysia and its society, as described previously, is a product of multiple overlapping processes within a short span of time. Colonialism, nationalism and national building before and post-independence, combined with economic growth, all compressed into a short period of time, worked together in creating a specific modernity and particular Malaysian cosmopolitanism that is unique, informed by its socio-historical, religious and cultural conditions. This situation is similar to the compressed modernity that Chang (2010: 466) advocated, which is “a civilizational condition in which economic, political, social and/or cultural changes occur in an extremely condensed manner in respect to both time and space, and in which the dynamic coexistence of mutually disparate historical and social elements leads to the construction and reconstruction of a highly complex and fluid social system”. Much of Malaysia (political and socio-economic situations) today is a product of 56 years of work since the granting of independence; a very short period of time considering other countries that might have had many centuries to build their nations. Acknowledging the country’s

specific experiences, the identity of the New Malay as Malay Muslim, this thesis takes rooted, Muslim cosmopolitanism as ground to work from, while problematising earlier approaches and extending them to provide the agenda for this research.

## **2.7. Summary**

To conclude, the aim of this chapter has been to revisit, examine and extend the available approaches to cosmopolitan New Malay in the Malaysian academic discourse, and by doing so set the agenda for this research. This chapter begins with an introduction to the New Malay, a middle class professional Malay Malaysian, which Dr Mahathir Mohamad introduced in 1991; the drafting of an affirmative action plan (NEP 1971) to improve the standard of living of the Malays and pull them out of poverty that led to the emergence of this group of successful Malays. It was essential to understand this New Malay individual before revisiting a cosmopolitan(ism) analysis of this group. Malaysian cosmopolitanism is an area less explored in the Malaysian discourse although it is mentioned from time to time in papers focusing on Malaysia's development. Three exceptions to this lack of attention are Yao (2003), Chong (2005), and Kahn (2006, 2008). Their work on Malaysian cosmopolitanism have been discussed to provide the ground upon which to situate this research on cosmopolitan Malay Malaysian students. This chapter has revisited their cosmopolitan New Malay analysis for the purpose of problematising their conceptualisation of cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitans and to extend it further by including another potential group of cosmopolitans, the

international students. A group that in many other studies has been recognised as a group that holds great potential for themselves and their society as a whole; a group that has been found to be cosmopolitan in their own contexts. Yao (2003), Chong (2005), and Kahn (2006, 2008) work has merits and provides good ground for understanding particular, national and Muslim cosmopolitanism in Malaysia. However, their work needs to be extended and updated considering that it has been a while since any work on cosmopolitan New Malay has been conducted and that the international student (Malay Malaysian) hold important role in the future of *Bangsa Malaysia*. The socio-cultural changes that occur between then and now compels an update on the New Malay, taking different approaches and a new angle following the contemporary situation such as the growth of new social media which provide users with more chances for networking. Another important element that this thesis proposes is the inclusion of the students everyday online interactions and engagements in the analysis. Not wanting to sound technologically deterministic, online social media such as social network sites, especially their features and affordances, allow for greater potential in social interactions and engagements that transcend physical boundaries. This thesis argues for the relevance and importance of everyday interactions and experiences as it tries to escape the common boxing of the analysis of Malay cosmopolitanism by political and economic conditions. The next chapter provides the framework to study the Malay Malaysian students everyday interactions on Facebook. It starts off by drawing together the main elements discussed in this chapter: Malay students, everyday cosmopolitanism and online interactions on Facebook. It then introduces and discusses the two frameworks this thesis adopts in order to proceed with the

analysis: 1) Everyday (ordinary) Cosmopolitanism (Kendall et al., 2009) and 2) Performance and Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Goffman 1955, 1959). As this thesis adopts frameworks that were originally applied in the offline setting, it will discuss the ways they are to be adapted and appropriated in this research.



# Chapter 3

## Framing Everyday Online Cosmopolitanism

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### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a more detailed approach to study the Malay Malaysian everyday online cosmopolitanism, which this thesis proposes to conduct following the dissatisfaction expressed in chapter two with the earlier analysis on cosmopolitan New Malay by Souchou Yao (2003), Terence Chong (2005) and Joel Kahn (2006, 2008). Their work together produced a valuable understanding and new kind of thinking of the New Malay as a cosmopolitan but what this thesis disagrees and finds fault with, is their limited take on Malaysian cosmopolitanism that is restricted to economic and political situations in the country; the interpretation of the *Bumiputera* Malay's empathy towards the adamant discrimination based on ethnicity in Malaysia as cosmopolitan sentiment; institutionalised cosmopolitanism through the ideology of *Islam Hadhari* promoted by the country's fifth Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi; hybridity and cultural diversity as a basis for the creation of a cosmopolitan condition and themselves signalling cosmopolitanism. Their work lacks everyday context and experiences in analysing cosmopolitanism, thus this thesis argues for the inclusion of the Malay Malaysian students' everyday online interactions and experiences to analyse potential cosmopolitanism development in these students everyday context. Chapter two of this thesis, following the discussion of the three earlier authors'

work on cosmopolitan New Malay and Malay cosmopolitanism, has proposed to study a group of Malay Malaysian students' Facebook interactions as a way to gain insight into their everyday experiences that can potentially create cosmopolitan sensibilities and subsequently the performance of these cosmopolitan sensibilities in the forms of social interactions and exhibition of identity-sharing information on the site. What this chapter three aims to produce is a detailed approach to studying their everyday cosmopolitanism on Facebook. To accomplish this, this chapter first discusses everyday cosmopolitanism to highlight its importance in the growing field of cosmopolitanism research and as an important element in this form of cosmopolitanism, which is its practical performative aspect. Chapter three also provides readers with the ways in which this research plans to study everyday cosmopolitanism. This thesis, as indicated in the previous chapter, follows those scholars whose work has emphasised the everydayness and practical aspect of the concept (Lamont and Aksartova, 2002; Kendall and Woodward, 2004; Iqtidar, 2009; Iqtidar, 2012; Anderson, 2004; Pieterse, 2006; Skrbiš and Woodward, 2007; Jeffrey and McFarlane, 2008; Kendall, Skrbiš and Woodward, 2009). This thesis specifically draws from Kendall, Skrbiš and Woodward's (2009) definition of cosmopolitanism that is grounded in an individual's contextualised everyday experiences (with its temporal aspect) rather than its earlier generic and abstract conceptualisation as 'Citizen of the World'. They also emphasise both the discursive resources that are drawn from locatable experiences and the performance of cosmopolitanism, which reflect the rooted, situation based and practical cosmopolitanism, making it the most suitable take for this research to work from.

Kendall et al.'s (2009) practical and performative take on cosmopolitanism, that emphasised sensibilities and performances, is further discussed and appropriated within the context of online social interactions and engagements. This thesis acknowledges the obvious differences between online and offline interactions and engagements, due to their respective properties and available features. Online interactions are facilitated by the available infrastructure, properties, features and affordances that this particular medium (social network site) in general offers, as well as features and affordances specific to the selected site for this research – Facebook. Hence researching the discursive resources individual user draw from based on their experiences and information gathering on Facebook and the performance of cosmopolitanism in the form of sociabilities and exhibition must take into account factors pertinent to this social network site. Factors such as its affordance and available features, collapsed context and the different types of audiences present, and privacy issues resulted from the infrastructural design of the site. Other factors pertinent to the users themselves, such as motivation to use the site and to become an open person (not necessarily a cosmopolitan), the process of self-reflexivity involved through social interactions and engagements on Facebook, as well as user's self-disclosure and self-censorship, similarly need to be taken into account in this online cosmopolitanism analysis. By doing so, this would allow the researcher to gain insight into individual's experiences, perceptions, choices and decisions in relation to cosmopolitanism development. The former factors are specific to Facebook features and infrastructure, while the latter are specific to the individual user. Together they form what the thesis author refers to as the dynamics of online cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitanising experience of

the Malay students rests upon these factors, which can be safely assumed to be tailored to individual user's own experiences, choices and decisions.

Following Kendall et al.'s (2009) take on cosmopolitanism, the thesis author discerns two aspects of the concept: one is the discursive resources the individual draws from, which marks cosmopolitan sensibilities and the other is its performative aspect. The six aforementioned dynamics of cosmopolitanism contribute to both sensibilities and performance in distinct ways and they vary according to the user's personalised use of the site, such as their Facebook Friends network, choices over features to use and knowledge of the settings to manage privacy. The last two sections of this chapter will see further discussion of the six factors in relation to the cultivation and performance of cosmopolitanism.

The first section on exploring cosmopolitanism on Facebook discusses the potential development of cosmopolitan sensibilities on the site, due to its affordances and capabilities; for instance in connecting people all over the world transcending physical barriers and the opportunity given to the users to represent themselves, narrating their everyday experiences, and sharing these experiences on the site for others to consume. The second section provides the ways to analyse performance of cosmopolitanism in the forms of presentation of self to be assessed through users' sociabilities and exhibition of identity-sharing information. As performance in this thesis is accepted as presentation of self, hence Erving Goffman's (1959) Presentation of Self Framework is applied in this thesis to analyse online cosmopolitan performance. It is chosen for its known usefulness in other research

on self-presentation online. Because his framework was developed from an offline context, which is distinct from the online context, the author of this thesis is cognisant of the problems of directly applying his stage and context themes in this research. This chapter will thus provide a discussion of the marked distinctions online space creates in relation to this concept of stage. In this thesis, the site's features are considered as stage and the audiences (different groups of audience brought together online) are regarded as context. Impression management on Facebook functions according to the site's features, settings, contexts, users' motivation and experience. Taking all these together, and incorporating them in the practical everyday online cosmopolitanism analysis, allows this research to reach its goal: to understand and provide new ways of analysing Malay Malaysian students' cosmopolitanism that is based on everyday experiences.

### **3.2. Exploring Cosmopolitanism in Everyday Life**

The previous chapter has provided the background to this research by laying out the earlier studies on cosmopolitan New Malay and the critiques the author of this thesis has of them. Notwithstanding the valuable contribution the aforementioned scholars made to Malaysian academic discourse, there are three components that this thesis finds would provide a valuable contribution to the individual Malay cosmopolitanism. First is the inclusion of mobile Malay Malaysian students and their experiences in cosmopolitan development; second: everyday experiences which are apparently absent from their analysis that are heavy on socio-cultural and political issues originating from historical events of the country and third:

directing analysis of cosmopolitanism to their online experiences considering the growing use of the internet and social network sites by this group of Malay students. This research will study Malay Malaysians' everyday cosmopolitanism, following the growing recognition of the cosmopolitanism as an actually existing experiences grounded to everyday situations rather than simply accepting it as an abstract concept of openness to cultural diversities, and a cosmopolitan as an individual seeing him/herself as someone who shoulders responsibilities for general humankind.

This researcher concedes that there is no easy way to assess cosmopolitanism, due to the abundant interpretations offered by academics on what openness to cultural diversities entails and the suggestions provided on assessing a cosmopolitan. The apparent difficulties in evaluating the concept are seemingly a result of the indeterminacy of this highly contested term. Openness, tolerance, and flexibilities can never be the same between individuals, as Woodward and Skrbiš (2012: 136) emphasised "(o)penness is not the same thing for every person, nor is it the same for each person across particular settings". There is the need to recognise what constitutes openness, tolerance and flexibilities for an individual. Therefore cosmopolitanism cannot be generalised but focus has to be directed to specific individual's experiences and hence their performative cosmopolitan self. As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, there is a growing body of literature on the concept of everyday practical cosmopolitanism. Among those scholars supporting this particular take this researcher has selected and will follow Kendall et al.'s (2009) interpretation of the concept and support their call for a more

detailed account of what openness refers to, and how we can measure and compare the cosmopolitanism of one individual with another. Hence the need to include the everyday context of individual experiences, rather than bringing together a group of Malay cosmopolitans based on economic and political issues to allow more accurate descriptions, and knowledge of their openness to cultural differences, according to their specific contexts.

Everyday cosmopolitanism is defined “a set of structurally grounded and locatable, discursive resources available to social actors which is variably deployed to deal with emergent agendas and issues, related to things like cultural diversity, the global, and otherness...a *cultural repertoire performed by individuals* to deal with objects, experiences and people and which is encouraged by particular contexts, fusions of circumstance and motive, and frames of interpretation” (Kendall et al., 2009: 108). Such a definition accentuates the practical element and varied experiences, contexts, and actions contributing to both cosmopolitan sensibilities and performance, creating a cosmopolitanism that is individualised and personal. The first set of the definition refers to discursive resources individuals draw from in order to express or cultivate openness, tolerance and flexibilities towards others from different cultural backgrounds. The second set – cultural repertoire performed by individuals – demonstrates an important part of the currently growing cosmopolitanism approach that is the performance of those cosmopolitan sensibilities. The authors’ approach bridged the typical dominant focus on cosmopolitan sensibilities to include actual actions of the actors. The importance of stressing its performative aspect is justified by the individualised, contextualised,

spatialised and temporalised aspects of cosmopolitanism, as have been demonstrated in numerous studies; thus it cannot remain as thoughts and feelings if we want to understand everyday cosmopolitanism (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002).

### **3.2.1. Cosmopolitanism as Practice and Performance**

Almost always we encounter academic work emphasising cultivation of cosmopolitan disposition and sensibilities through exposures, social interactions and institution-based projects (Chong, 2005; Kahn, 2006; Dolby and Rizvi, 2008; Fincher, 2011); there is noticeably less emphasis on the performance of these very cosmopolitan thoughts and feelings. Recently a growing number of scholars have delved deeper into the performance of cosmopolitanism, as can be seen in the work of Glick Schiller et al. (2009) (and other contributors in the special issue on *Cosmopolitan Sociability: Locating Transnational Diasporic and Religious Networks in Ethnic and Racial Studies*) and Molz (2006).

Glick Schiller et al. (2009) and other contributors in the journal grounded their studies on concrete social practices and 'ways of being'. Performance of cosmopolitanism, via the sociabilities of transnational mobile people's daily interactions in an offline environment, was studied. The type of cosmopolitanism was emphasised that is rooted and as a result discovered the retention of the cultural and religious backgrounds of the people under study. The approach to cosmopolitanism that they took embraces the research subjects' own ethnic background while experiencing openness across differences, rather than through



the celebration of differences (2011: 403). This is a similar vision to the ordinary cosmopolitanism advocated by Lamont and Aksartova (2002), summarised in the previous chapter. In the latter's cases, performance of cosmopolitanism is conducted through everyday social encounters, which form one of the two types of activities by which this research studies performance: *sociabilities*.

As for Molz (2006), her study demonstrated travellers expressing cosmopolitanism through *presentation of self* (the second type of performance this research focuses on) – physical identification through sartorial preference. She is interested in how cosmopolitan dispositions (openness, tolerance and flexibility) were embodied physically by travellers. She explores how individuals embody cosmopolitanism using the concept of fit by looking at how travellers prepared themselves to be mentally and physically fit for global travel (getting immunised for instance), and by how they try to fit in the place and societies they travel to. Those travellers she studied, in their attempts to fit in, donned the styles that do not have a 'touristy' look. Rather a look that allows them to blend in without passing off as local or as tourist. In so doing, they exhibit a form of cosmopolitan disposition, the willingness to be flexible and adaptive to the different environment and culture. What these two examples of performances revealed are varied cosmopolitan performances.

In the examples provided above there is no clear-cut division between sensibilities and performance of cosmopolitanism, although Glick Schiller et al. (2009) and Molz (2006) individual work mentioned above recognises the importance of including and assessing performative aspects in cosmopolitanism research. This researcher

contends that, following Woodward and Skrbiš (2012), sensibilities and performances are both different and need to be presented on their own to later allow us to view what types of sensibilities are performed, the ways in which they are performed and the context involved. If we refer back to Kendall et al.'s (2009) aforementioned definition of cosmopolitanism, sensibilities are not automatically performed, but are variably deployed and performed according to the motivation of the individual and the contexts and circumstances individuals are in. Hence, this supports the argument that separates both sensibilities and performances in cosmopolitanism research. They are also dissimilar in nature: sensibilities, in this thesis, refer to thoughts and feelings while performances can be accepted as presentation of self through sociabilities (social interactions) and exhibition<sup>20</sup> (identity sharing information). Therefore both require specific analytical tools to assess the Malay Malaysian students' individual sensibilities and performances.

How do we measure practical everyday cosmopolitanism and its performances? This section has so far elucidated the point that cosmopolitanism is particular, grounded in everyday experiences and that no-one's cosmopolitanism can be identical; therefore to assess both sensibilities and performances of cosmopolitanism the researcher must include personal experiences, choices, and decisions involved in relation to their online interactions and engagements.

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<sup>20</sup> The word *exhibition* is taken from Hogan's (2010) paper on presentation of self in social media. He asserts that performance and exhibition are two distinct components that should not be confused when researching presentation of self. He proposed exhibitional approach for information submitted by users on social media in the forms of status updates, photos in photo galleries and blog posts (p.381) that are accessible for unintended users and are found on the site without specific situations. This thesis on the other hand acknowledges exhibition (identity sharing information) as part of individual performance together with sociabilities (actual interactions) in its analysis of online cosmopolitanism.

Furthermore, because of the different space (online) in which cosmopolitanism is studied, the research has to consider the properties and infrastructure of this space and the emerging contexts resulting from them. Although the examples on performance of cosmopolitanism, presented above in the form of sociabilities and presentation of self by Glick Schiller et al. (2009) and Molz (2006), are similar to the focus of this research, they are in fact based on offline social encounters, thus representing types of performances that emerged out of face to face offline encounters. As this research studies online cosmopolitanism, assessing the development of sensibilities through the discursive resources gathered, and the performative aspects of cosmopolitanism, obliges the researcher to consider Facebook's infrastructure, properties, settings and features, and that the online social contexts, where both sensibilities and performances are actively created, developed and acted within. In the online context, the presentation of self as the performance of cosmopolitanism (to be assessed in users' sociabilities and exhibition) can be analysed using Erving Goffman's Presentation of Self in Everyday Life framework; a useful framework to draw from, due to its emphasis on the contextualised, spatialised and temporalised aspects of performance and presentation of self, that resonates with the varied everyday contexts underlined in this thesis.

This thesis, with its emphasis on individual everyday experiences, includes individual's personal motivation, self-reflexivity process, self-disclosure and self-censorship process in order to understand the specifics of users' actions, choices and decisions with regards to online interactions and engagements, cultivation of

sensibilities and performance of cosmopolitanism; also included are those factors pertaining to the site's infrastructure and properties which have also been documented in other studies (Acquisti and Gross, 2006; Ellison et al., 2011; Vitak, 2012). Together they form the dynamics of online cosmopolitanism and are important elements in relation to the study of online social interactions. By considering the site's affordance and features, audiences and collapsed context, as well as privacy issues, this thesis would be able to grasp the site's contexts relevant to shaping individual's online behaviours and actions. A site's design and structure (especially of the profile) is important in this analysis, as it is the *stage* at which cosmopolitanism is developed, performed and assessed. A later section on the performance of cosmopolitanism will discuss the importance of stage, using Erving Goffman's Front and Back Stage theme in his 'Presentation of Self in Everyday Life' framework and how the stages (front and back) shape individual actions and perceptions and consequently influence presentation of the cosmopolitan self, the latter being of major interest in this thesis. When all six factors – motivation; self-reflexivity; self-disclosure and self-censorship; features and affordances; collapsed contexts and audience; and privacy issues) are explored and analysed, this thesis would be able to grasp users' personal preferences, choices, decisions and actions and the influence of those external factors (context, other users, the site's affordances) in the development of cosmopolitan sensibilities and performances. The next section explores cosmopolitanism on Facebook by separating the discussion of sensibilities and sociabilities, in order to allow for a better comprehension of the differences between the two aspects of cosmopolitanism.

This next section aims to provide a detailed exploration of how this thesis plans to study both sensibilities and performances on Facebook. It separates cultivation of sensibilities and performances in different sections, to provide readers with a clearer discussion of the processes involved in each aspect of cosmopolitanism.

### **3.3. Exploring Cosmopolitanism on Facebook – Drawing Discursive Resources on Facebook**

In the aforementioned definition of cosmopolitanism offered by Kendall et al. (2009), the concept is accepted as *a set of structurally grounded and locatable, discursive resources* available to individuals. The discursive resources are understood here as experiences, information shared by others, and users' self-reflexivity processes. In this online context, these discursive resources are obtained through Facebook interactions and engagements; thus the site's settings, features, contexts, audiences, users' interactions and engagements are important in the online cosmopolitanism analysis.

Roger Silverstone, Alexa Robertson and Ayse Caglar, in their individual writings, speak of cosmopolitanism drawn from the macro level - through television programmes and news reporting for instance - but what a site such as Facebook offers is information at the micro-scale level, providing different types of information than those found in a macro-scale setting. In this micro-scale media sharing, information and materials presented to the audience are no longer just represented by a mediator (producers, editors, advertisers) who decides selectively

what to present (usually with certain motives), but are now predominantly contributed by users. What is (selectively) presented by the users is immediate, context dependent and therefore providing a different set of materials than those offered by news broadcasters and documentary producers for instance. The users do not rely on a middle person (such as a news reporter) to narrate important events in their lives but they themselves are the producers, narrating everyday happenings on their profiles. User-led content is creatively presented, created for others to see and the mundane things that previously were not shared online are now available to other users, exposing their everydayness online. What they eat, what they do, what they think of, where they are, is all available on the site for others to consume. Available, personalisable and customisable profiles allow users to narrate their own experiences, so writing themselves into being (Sundén, 2003; boyd, 2008; Stern, 2008). It is no longer about producers narrating lives of others and presenting materials to audiences, but others/users themselves have the power to represent him/herself. Now, with the mushrooming of social media that allows users direct access to sites, creating and presenting their own material, making them “editors and creators – designing and creating their self-representations, choosing what to bring to the foreground or hide in the background” (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013:103), brings their more immediate experience and context to the fore, the discursive resources mentioned earlier would presumably be different than those developed from a more macro-level process.

These individualised and selected representations of mundane everyday activities on the media however create new forms of responsibilities and their associated burdens. The responsibilities that once were in the hand of the broadcasters have now been transferred to individuals. This transfer of responsibilities does, in a way, resonate with Bauman's (2001: 144) individualism and freedom that sees the "emancipation of the individual from the ascribed, inherited and inborn determination of his or her social character...transforming human 'identity' from a 'given' into a 'task' – and charging the actors with the responsibility for performing that tasks and for the consequences (also the side effects) of their performance". In the context of this emerging freedom to represent (intentionally or not) self to others through social media, huge responsibility is placed on the shoulder of users (presenter/sharer). They are not only the users but also what many scholars (such as Len Ang, David Miller, Greg Philo, and Sonia Livingstone) have labelled as "active audience", those who rework images, narratives within their own socio-cultural context; therefore also making meaning of information received accordingly. As a user and active audience members, they create complex and multiple resources for themselves and others to draw from, as well as also selectively and reflexively absorbing what is presented to them, opening doors to potential cosmopolitan sensibilities.

As a result of this empowerment, the proper distance that Roger Silverstone (2007) espoused is blurred in this context. According to Silverstone, a proper distance is neither too close nor too far; it refers to the proximity of reach between audience and others to allow the audience to mentally engage with the differences and

similarities they have with the represented others, and 'to construct their own images and narratives based upon them' (p.48). What this proper distance now is will be fully dependent on the users themselves, as they negotiate their everyday experiences, sharing them on sites such as Facebook. This also suggests the blurring of private and public dichotomy that has been intensively discussed by studies focusing on the Internet and social interactions (Gross and Acquisti, 2005; Acquisti and Gross, 2005; Barnes, 2006; Lewis et al., 2008; Krasnova et al., 2009; boyd and Hargittai, 2010; Ellison et al., 2011; Vitak, 2012). Due to the properties of social media and social network sites, what used to be private matters are increasingly brought into the open, hence changing their status into public property, available for public consumption thus exposing others to a more varied type of information, so creating a huge potential for exploring others' lives and what matters to them. This echoes the temporality of the front and back stage Goffman espouses, which will be discussed in later section. This change in the properties of the site, and the freedom given to users to act freely online, can create a platform for a user to contribute to others' development of cosmopolitan sensibilities through their sharing of mundane or not so mundane quotidian experiences, allowing for others' to realise, appreciate and celebrate their similarities and differences.

Collapsing of different contexts, due to the presence of different groups of audiences, could create a bottomless database with varieties of cultural resources to draw from. Thus Facebook, as a social networking site, can potentially develop cosmopolitan sensibilities through the discursive resources made available by users from their online sharing and updates. What remains, as questions, are now the



types of information that are made available by other users in a space characterised by collapsed multiple contexts and what the receiver reflexively absorbs. Exploring receivers' motivation to engage with available information, and the reflexivity processes involved with this, allows the researcher to delve deeper into the actual social encounters that they could potentially draw from and deploy, when needing to deal with emergent agendas and issues that relate to cultural diversities.

Motivation<sup>21</sup> to be a cosmopolitan is rarely focused upon in cosmopolitanism research that assumes the automatic creation of a cosmopolitan through cultural exposure and even in studies that do not make such an assumption (Snee, 2013). The researcher argues for motivation's inclusion in the exploration of online cosmopolitanism analysis for its valuable insights into a user's personal thoughts and feelings with regards to openness to cultural differences and deliberate actions. With regards to the cultivation of cosmopolitan sensibilities, motivation here refers to motivation to be a cosmopolitan (open to cultural differences), to (reflexively) absorb information shared by other users, to seek for those beyond what appears on the surface<sup>22</sup> of the site and one's own socio-cultural network through active searching of information in the Facebook database and the effective use of the site's features; for example Friend's profile, Pages, open to public users' profiles. The potential of cosmopolitan development does not only rest upon an individual's motivation but is also dependent upon a number of factors, such as the glitches

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<sup>21</sup> Skey (2012) also sees the need to investigate underlying motivations of the individuals.

<sup>22</sup> Surface here refers to information that appears on their newsfeed only. Updates from other users are sent to their Friends' newsfeed that contains all the updates and activities from those in their Network and Pages they have *liked*.

associated with Facebook's infrastructure and programming, which is explored shortly.

The growth of Internet usage and the availability of social media for consumption could convince users of the emergence of a new, connected world. The open network and accessibility of Facebook, would suggest the immeasurable potential of multiple interactions that transcend nationalities and localities, and this very affordance (its reach) would make it a powerful site for the development of cosmopolitan sensibilities. But as Silverstone (2006) has asked "(t)he media have extended reach, but have they also extended understanding? The media have provided the resources for an enlarged mentality, but have they facilitated representative thinking and judgements?" Is Facebook a site that supposedly expanded understanding of the others? Has Facebook supported development of cosmopolitan Malay Malaysian students? More research on Facebook usage and interactions is displaying social interactions based on offline networks and closed groups (Ellison et al., 2011). Despite being an open space that could connect strangers, interestingly users find themselves friending other users who they know offline or are already acquainted with, before adding them on Facebook. What then are the implications of this closed-network to development of cosmopolitan sensibilities?

A couple of years ago media users and media scholars were introduced to the concept of The Filter Bubble by Eli Pariser (2011); it explained that in the open spaces of media, materials and information received might not be as wide-ranging

as we would expect. Facebook, for instance, has an algorithm that organised information received by users on their newsfeed, “(t)he news feed algorithm uses several factors to determine top stories, including the number of comments, who posted the story, and what type of post it is (ex: photo, video, status updates, etc.)” (Facebook Help Center, 2012a). The algorithm selected certain information assumed to be of interest to the users and consequently omitted other potential topics of interest. This eventually creates an informational bubble that filters other information about materials based on a user’s current online behaviour and activities and what Facebook assumed they would want to have on their news feed. The filter bubble works against the potential of social media to connect people worldwide and to converge cultural diversities. It poses a drawback for cultivating sensibilities that should be based on cultural diversities, not on limited access to materials and substance. Even though this filter bubble, and the filtering process, is not what Arjun Appadurai (1996) and Roger Silverstone (2006) might have insinuated in their work on media disjuncture or disconnectivity, it can be suggested here that, because of the filter bubble, sites can disconnect people rather than provide the bridge for two or multiple parties to connect. This idea of disconnectivity is also discussed by Kendall et al. (2008) in relation to technologies becoming an impediment to cosmopolitan engagements.

What materials are *pushed* to individuals’ news feeds on Facebook, and how they draw from them with regards to cosmopolitan sensibilities, are issues worth investigating in this research. Facebook provides users with control over their newsfeed (newsfeed control settings) and the customisation of the settings are

dependent upon a user's knowledge of the situation (algorithm used by Facebook) and the awareness of the available settings to customise one's own newsfeed. Information gathering rests upon users' motivation, interests and the available settings and features to allow certain information and materials to be *pushed* to the users. Whether Facebook can create cosmopolitan sensibilities is now a matter of empirical research and this research will endeavour to investigate this through the analysis of the respondents' everyday experience on Facebook by exploring the aforementioned factors: motivation, self-reflexivity, affordances and features, collapsed context and audiences. What motivates an individual to seek information, especially beyond their own network, the discursive resources they draw from when thinking of cultural diversities and when presented with or faced by situations eliciting specific cosmopolitan responses, are to be explored in this research in an attempt to understand individual Malay Malaysian student's contextualised development of cosmopolitan sensibilities.

### **3.4. Exploring Cosmopolitanism on Facebook – Presentation of Self (Sociabilities and Exhibition)**

Performance of cosmopolitanism can be assessed in varieties of ways as demonstrated by the two offline examples provided earlier (sociabilities and presentation of self). However, in this thesis, assessment of cosmopolitan performance focuses solely on presentation of cosmopolitan self through online

social interactions (sociabilities) and identity sharing information (exhibition)<sup>23</sup>. The ways in which users present themselves online, and the reasons behind their actions, have been of a great interest to scholars studying different forms of online interactions and the factors influencing them. Some researchers have directly addressed online presentation of self (Stern, 2008; Whitty, 2008; Hogan, 2010; Tosun, 2012; Rui and Stefanone, 2012; Chen and Marcus, 2012) while some others indirectly discuss this through other topics of interests, such as privacy issues and collapsed context in online sites (Ellison et al., 2011; Lampinen et al., 2011; Vitak, 2012; Sleeper et al., 2013). The growing and persistent interest in self-presentation, especially in new social media that have witnessed users being handed the power to represent themselves, hence directly creating the users discussed in the previous section, suggests self-presentation's significance in the study of online behaviour. This thesis contends that researching performance of cosmopolitanism on Facebook, through the Malay Malaysian self-presentation in social interactions and exhibition of self, would provide the contexts that guide users' online behaviour, will reveal the reasons for behaving the way they do and accordingly provide an insight into their performance of cosmopolitanism. Thus presentation of self is a practical and useful aspect to assess cosmopolitanism as it can provide the meanings and influencing factors behind every performance of self online. One focus of this thesis is on the processes involved in presenting self to others that guide the information the users disclose and censor in social interactions and

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<sup>23</sup> Sociabilities in this thesis refers to social interactions (mainly textual but can also be multimodal) between two or more users while exhibition refers to information that users share on the profile as a means to tell others their basic information and also other supporting information, such as their Likes and Education. Presentation of self in both sociabilities and exhibition is assessed in terms of information shared and censored.

exhibition of self. Performance of cosmopolitanism, as Kendall et al. (2009) have elucidated depends upon context, circumstances, motivation and frames of interpretation of the individuals explicating the idea of contextualised and individualised aspects of an individual's cosmopolitan performances. Hence going deeper into the specific contexts, circumstances they are in, the cosmopolitan sensibilities they have cultivated so far (online or offline) and their motives in performing cosmopolitanism allow for much richer data on the factors influencing user's self-disclosure and self-censorship on Facebook.

Performance in the online space is anticipated to be different from that in the offline space, due to the infrastructure and properties of online sites. Researching self-presentation on Facebook must take into account the site's specific properties, the available features such as Messages, Chat, Profile, Status Updates sections, and the general affordances online sites created in terms of its data persistence, scalability, searchability, replicability (boyd 2008; 2010) and (a)synchronicity<sup>24</sup> because of the distinct social environment an online site, such as Facebook, creates for presentation of self. Unlike offline social interactions that occur in a single locality, context and with a specific audience, online social interactions, as a matter of fact, cannot be restricted to a single context. Despite being conducted on certain features such as status updates on a user profile, conversations may also appear elsewhere such as in other users' newsfeeds, outside of the context and time frame when the interactions happened, demonstrating the persistency of information

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<sup>24</sup> Synchronicity refers to real time communication while Asynchronicity refers to delayed communication.

shared on the site. Performances (presentation of self) thus become complex in this out of context and out of time information availability. How users manage these complex environments, and successfully present themselves to others, is of interest to this thesis. Assessing presentation of self and the strategies users employ in negotiating this complex environment allows everyday context to be included and analysed in this complex research initiative, hence providing a much more detailed and grounded cosmopolitan performance which stresses the everyday experiences of individual Malay Malaysian students in its Malay Malaysian online cosmopolitanism analysis.

To study performance of cosmopolitanism in the form of presentation of self on Facebook, this thesis draws from Erving Goffman's *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* framework, a framework that has been proven useful to analyse users behaviours online by the increasing (albeit in small number) research projects adopting and extending his framework, despite being developed from an offline context. His concepts of 'front' and 'back' stage, 'impression management', 'facework' and 'performance' have all been appropriated on online spaces in general, as well as on specific social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, to understand user's online behaviour (Donath, 1999; Schroeder, 2002; boyd, 2004; 2006; 2007; Hewitt and Forte, 2006; Tufekci, 2008; Quan-Haase and Collins, 2008; Dalsgaard, 2008; Hogan, 2010; Davies, 2012; and Lim et al., 2012). The following themes<sup>25</sup> make up the six in Goffman's (1959) *Presentation of Self in*

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<sup>25</sup> With the exception of Face-work that was elaborated intensively in his earlier work in 1955 – *On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interactions*. The concept of

Everyday Life framework: performance, regions (front and back), impression management (given and given off), discrepant roles, the team and communication out of character. This research has specifically chosen the first three themes and his Face-work concept for their relevance to the study of cosmopolitan performances on Facebook. In his dramaturgical model, life is about performance and we, the social actors, are always performing. Central to this performance are the actors, situation (social encounter), context (settings of the social encounter), stage (location of the social encounter), and impression management (given, given off and maintaining face). A social actor being in a situation and context that requires him to act accordingly, for instance a lecturer in the university ground or in lecture rooms (front stage), in front of his colleagues and students, has to act according to his position as a lecturer while in the setting and situation that expects him to do so. While performing this act this social actor has to successfully present self as others expect him to be – a lecturer -- thus he needs to manage the actual impression others have of him and what he wishes others to have of him. A social actor in this case is always performing a certain self but when he is outside of the front stage (for instance outside the view of his colleagues and students, or back at home) the appearance he maintains can be relaxed. Keeping up the impression others have of him is important in order to keep 'face'. Failure to do so can affect his future self and the trust or positive views others have of him. As Goffman (1959:69) writes "(t)hose caught out in the act of telling barefaced lies not only lose face during the interaction but may have their face destroyed, for it is felt by many

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Face-work was revisited in his Presentation of Self in Everyday Framework (1959) to describe and analyse performances and social encounters.



audiences that if an individual can once bring himself to tell such a lie, he ought never again to be fully trusted". This highlights the need to be consistent with the presented self when in the presence of audiences. Similarly, in online space (site) such as Facebook, maintaining face is equally important. A user is expected to maintain a consistent and acceptable image to be trusted. This is reflected in the findings of some research on Facebook and identity expression that found maintaining online image is vital to saving one's face (Dalsgaard, 2008; Lim et al., 2012; Sleeper et al., 2013). Discrepancies in presentation of image on Facebook and offline also could be questioned and contested.

How can this dramaturgical model be translated on Facebook? The themes Goffman developed, particularly back and front stages, impression management and performance have been applied and extended in recent studies about Facebook. They however cannot be directly applied online due to the differences in properties and features of the site. The offline performance Goffman speaks of is based on specific context, location and with specified groups of audiences; in online sites such as Facebook the nature of performances changes, as has been described earlier, due to Facebook's infrastructure, features and affordances, which must be incorporated into this research. Due to constant updates made on the site, it is vital for this research to be aware of the available features during the study and any updates on the site. This constant update and improvement of the site has an implication for the application and extension of Goffman's framework in this research. To illustrate this evolution, Facebook at its early stage only had basic

features<sup>26</sup> such as Profile, Photo Albums, Messages and Status Updates. Now, 10 years after it was founded, we are seeing more integrated features such as:

- 1) Like button (introduced in 2010) that is linked to most websites (articles, products), online newspaper articles and blogs to mention a few;
- 2) Facebook Connect (introduced in 2009) that allows users to share information they obtained (articles they read and commented on) on other sites than Facebook and to connect their Facebook account with other websites;
- 3) Music applications such as Spotify that allows users to share the music they are listening to;
- 4) Embedding made possible allowing video sharing;
- 5) Improved photo viewing and sharing experience with tagging capabilities;
- 6) Facebook games and other personalised application (Health, Lifestyle, Entertainment, Sports, Travel) in App Centre;
- 7) The News feed introduced in 2006 is “the center column of your home page—is a constantly updating list of stories from people and Pages that you follow on Facebook. News feed stories include status updates, photos, videos, links, app activity and likes” (Facebook Help Center 2012b);

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<sup>26</sup> Although at that time there were already very influential in shaping online interactions.

- 8) Timeline format (introduced gradually from the last quarter of 2011) with Cover Photo, new profile layout and the new Life Event button to add other information in the About Page;
- 9) and a very recent update (2013) is the introduction of Graph Search that provide users with an expanded searching capability, it “lets you search for more than you’ve been able to find before. You can use simple phrases to search for sets of people, places and things that match specific characteristics. These search results help you explore connections between people, places and things, and make fun discoveries” which could facilitate cosmopolitanism through network and connections building (Facebook Help Center, 2013a).

There are many other features that have not been included here but those mentioned should communicate to readers the expanding possibilities Facebook could offer to an individual’s online performances. These continuous developments in the features and infrastructures have intensified and elevated our online social experience to a new level. The changing nature of Facebook can still be defined according to boyd and Ellison’s (2008) basic definition of a social network site: a site that allows users to “construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system; articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the

system” (boyd and Ellison, 2008). This public or semi-public profile (also called Timeline) is regarded, in this thesis, as the main stage for user to present themselves and perform accordingly. The changes and updates that have been made to the profile can alter users’ actions through new adapted ways of using the updated profile, hence creating new ways to present oneself to others. This research has to take into account the site’s prolific updates and improvements and the specific features available on the site, in general, and a user’s profile during the fieldwork. The ensuing application of Goffman’s front and back stage prism on Facebook is based on the features available during the period of the fieldwork. What this demonstrates is the significance of discussing the affordances and features of the site in an attempt to study performance of cosmopolitanism.

Bearing the differences between online and offline space in mind, to apply Goffman’s performance and presentation of self in this research the researcher must first address two important elements in his model: stage and context (including audience), as they are significant elements in this research because they regulate a social actor’s performance. The remainder of this section addresses these elements by appropriating them to Facebook’s features and properties.

#### **3.4.1. Stage – Facebook Profile and Features as “Stage”**

Performance, defined as “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influences on the observers” (Goffman, 1959: 32) in social

interactions have to occur somewhere, someplace and the types of behaviour associated with such performance and interactions are dependent on the stage, which includes context and situations. Goffman speaks of a region that is bounded by perception and effectively regulates behaviour. In physical space we can directly see or visualise a region, there are markers to show when a region ends and starts; for instance home, bounded by concrete walls, doors, windows, and in some properties by a fence. It forms multiple regions – open spaces (living room, dining room, family hall, corridors) and private spaces (bedroom, washroom), which in Goffman's context can be referred to as the front stage and back stage respectively. Once outside the individual is no longer in a private space but has gone into a public space that requires different sets of behaviours and actions to be performed, suited to the audience present, the settings, and the situation. It is important to note that there is also the temporal (situational) aspect of front and back stages, as Goffman explains "still there are many regions which function at one time and in one sense as a front region and at another time and in another sense as a back region" (1959: 127). The kids' bedroom for instance may become a front stage and a back stage for the owner. When alone, a child will see the room as providing some sort of safe haven from the outside (including family members) and when they have friends over, the very same room can transform into a front stage. Social interactions between the kids and their friends once inside the room are performed accordingly. For the kids their rooms, the layout, the paint colour, the expressions the rooms give and give off are part of their presentation of self (Livingstone, 2007<sup>27</sup>). The

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<sup>27</sup> For Livingstone (2007: 5) spaces, in Goffman's terms Front and Back, are no longer the dominant principle, they have now become communal or private spaces.

concept of front and back stages and their relationship, draws attention to the temporal context of the regions that can construct stages as front and back at different times and on different occasions. As reminded by Goffman (p. 129) “it must be kept in mind that in speaking of front and back regions we speak from the reference point of a particular performance, and we speak of the function that the place happens to serve at that time for the given performance”. This emphasises in some limited way the fluidity of the concept of front and back stages, and that performances vary according to the changes in the settings and contexts.

In a simplistic and direct application of Goffman’s front and back regions on Facebook, user profiles (with Cover photo, Profile photo, Status Updates and Photo Album, About Page) can be regarded as the front region while considering Messages (Inbox) and Chat as back regions, due to their more private nature. Some other studies (such as Hogan, 2010) have extended this concept of front and back region by considering profile online as the former and offline space as the latter. Offline space is understood as a back region where users prepare themselves for a performance online through activities on the site and on their profile. There could also be users who conceptualise offline as front and online as back. While seeing that this online-offline region extension has merits, this thesis argues that features on Facebook itself can, at any time the users wish, become back and front regions as has been explained earlier; a setting can be both front and back at the same time or in different times (Goffman, 1959: 127).

Controllability of the settings, through active management, makes this transformation possible. Profile photo, status update, photo albums are designed to allow audience management, thus giving a user the flexibility to decide what to present to certain groups of audience or to a specified individual. A photo album, for instance, can initially be open to all friends on user's Facebook, which makes this a front stage but sometime later can be made available only to a number of friends or *Only Me* resulting to a change in the status, from front to back stage. What was previously available can be made private hence altering the status of the features. Whilst there are features that are open and closed in nature, Messages (Inbox) and Chat are positioned as private spaces as access is restricted to individuals, or small group audiences.

What has been described here is a generalisation of Facebook features and that has not taken into account the individual's perception of what front and back regions on Facebook are. Bearing in mind that the use of Facebook is personalised, the site appeals to users in different ways for many different reasons; assuming what users consider as front and back, without taking into consideration their personal experiences and preferences, is problematic. If we do, we cannot then go beyond a generalised understanding of Facebook experience. Unlike in the offline environment, there are no physical markers that bound regions and spaces on Facebook. Perception of what these spaces meant (and mean) to users is crucial; what users perceive and acknowledge as front and back will shape their performance. In this thesis it is recognised that front is an 'open to other users to see' space and back is 'private, only for user and selected individuals' space. This

begs the questions of what users consider as open and private places (features) on Facebook and how (and why) they act on these spaces. This thesis argues that only through a clear understanding of which spaces are considered open and private, and the users' (the Malay Malaysian students group) appropriate behaviour in these spaces, can we understand the site users' specific contextualised performances of cosmopolitanism; thus this thesis assesses the user's motivation, as well as the site's affordances and features. These stages are where self is explored, expressed and managed. The different settings – the features and level of access Facebook offers can play a role in this self-presentation. These features allow users to not only convey information they wanted but while at this, conduct self-reflection from their self-disclosure and self-censorship process. The self-user's wish to perform on Facebook is not limited to what they include in their own Timeline, the personalised account by adding application and the updates shared, but also the Pages they Like, where they Check-In, their conversations elsewhere (Kirkpatrick, 2010). These days we can even share what we purchased online on Facebook by clicking *Share Your Purchase* button that appeared on shopping websites after we have completed our transactions. This, while telling others exactly what their friends bought, could also support their prior assumptions of the sharer's self and personality. People can learn about an individual and assess their self and identity in Facebook through direct (given) and indirect (given off) ways. What have been described here are Facebook features that are available and the possibilities they offer for cosmopolitan performance, but such a description could not provide us with the ways they are used, whom these features are used for, and the reasons for using them. The empirical chapters of this thesis will discuss their



front and back stages, features selected and preferred by users, the use of these features and the individualised experiences of Facebook in relation to the cultivation of cosmopolitan sensibilities, the creation of a cosmopolitan self and its performance. This is the site proposed for the analysis of the Malay Malaysian students cosmopolitanism; a site that allows social interactions that transcend physical locations and its affordances such as multimodal interactions, (a)synchronous interactions that could expand the potential of individuals connecting with other users beyond their own local (family, friends, neighbourhood, school, work) networks and exposure to context outside internal (Malaysia's) social relations.

### **3.4.2. Context – Negotiating Collapsed Context and Privacy**

Both Kendall et al. (2009) on performance of cosmopolitanism and Goffman (1959) on presentation of self in the Everyday Life Framework stress the significance of context in performance, since context provides the cues to social actors to act accordingly. In the earlier example, used to describe Goffman's model, a lecturer in the context of his workplace has to act in ways appropriate to his position as a lecturer and out of that context (for instance at home or in the shopping malls) his actions adjust to the other roles he has to play. Performing the appropriate role in the right context is important for many reasons, which can include being approved and accepted by other social actors. On Facebook this rigid context is blurred due to the presence of different groups of social actors (audiences) who were present in

the user's various contexts. Complexities arise out of these collapsed contexts; the performance of a social actor can no longer be confined to the expectations of a single group of audience or context but has to consider the expectations of different groups within multiple (collapsed) contexts. How the user manages this collapsed context and maintains his or her performance of cosmopolitanism is another interest of this research.

Unlike in earlier online sites, such as the MUDs, the Facebook network is based on offline connections but unlike the offline space, Facebook brings a physically and spatially segregated audience into a single space and, as a result, presents users with collapsed contexts. The collapsed context has received a great deal of attention among media scholars (boyd, 2008; Vitak et al., 2012); interests range from the problems it generates to managing this collapsed context. The issues of privacy and addressing different groups at the same time with the same piece of information are the highlight of this breaking down of walls between different groups. In offline space, family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances are, for most of the time,<sup>28</sup> segregated and located in different spaces, therefore performance of different selves (family members, friend to friends, a co-worker to colleagues, an educator to students) can be conducted flawlessly and efficiently. However, on Facebook these groups are merged and lumped together in a place and labelled as *Friends*. In a situation such as this, presentations of self have to cater to all groups. Any discrepancies in the presented self (for instance the marked contrast between 'friends to friends' self and 'an educator to students' self) can create confusion,

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<sup>28</sup> They can still come together in certain spaces and time.

conflict and misunderstanding. The expression given can create mixed given-off expressions to each group of audience, who might not be the direct recipient of the performances.

According to Goffman, a performer will always ensure that he or she is in character on Front stage<sup>29</sup>, manage the impressions other social actors have of him and not lose face by acting out of context; but how are presentation of self and performances managed in this collapsed context? A number of strategies have been listed to demonstrate how users have successfully managed this situation. Lampinen et al. (2011) describe two strategies: mental and behavioural. In the first, users limit disclosure online and in the second, it includes the use of the site's features to control access to user's uploads and by creating *Friend List*. Self-disclosure (including self-censorship) and the use of available settings provided by Facebook can be used to manage this situation. The awareness of what settings are available and which can be customised to fit the needs of users, is an important element in managing social interaction. However, despite the availability of custom privacy settings, many users are still unable to fully utilise them for a number of reasons, including no prior knowledge of the settings provided by Facebook, lack of technical skills to modify them or that they have used it before but it gets too complex with the growing number of friends and the diversity in the base users (Sleeper et al., 2013). These reasons highlight two factors in privacy settings and managing collapsed context: one, the importance of knowledge of the settings that

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<sup>29</sup> This front stage could be either online spaces or offline spaces according to the individual users themselves. Offline could be front and Facebook could be back stage for a user, while another user could see it the other way round.

includes the awareness of availability and the technical knowhow (knowing how to operate them) and second, the motivation users have to change the settings as they see fit. Lack of knowledge and low motivation make a great deal of difference to online interactions for some users. Other ways to manage consistent self-presentation in a space where all groups have been brought together (without the need to make changes to the custom privacy settings) are provided by Hogan (2010: 383). He introduces his '*Lowest Common Denominator*' theory to provide for explanation of users' presentation of self in a collapsed context. According to him, when presented with a situation of collapsed contexts, users are not discouraged from postings on Facebook because, prior to postings, they consider two groups of audience: first, those to whom the user wishes to present an idealised self and second, to those who might find the postings problematic. A user also considers the hidden audience which is not in a direct way the recipient of postings but is present online and has access to the postings. The *Lowest Common Denominator* of what is normatively acceptable is defined by this hidden audience.

Effective use of privacy settings, such as creating lists for groups of audience and utilising these lists, provide a leeway to negotiate and manage collapsed contexts. Presentation of self online might appear complicated and incomprehensible for some users, due to the breakdown in boundaries that separate different groups of audience. Nonetheless, the control of the settings can provide users with massive potential in managing presentation and performance of self on Facebook. What it requires is the knowledge of the settings, the motivation and time to do the controlling.

In contrast to offline interactions, the available online features and affordances facilitate performances in the latter. Rather than presenting self physically, performance is conducted through texts, hyperlinks, images, and profile (Thomas, 2004). These multimodal interactions allow users to present self in different ways to create a coherent self. Impressions given and given off through these multimodal interactions do not only allow the users themselves to provide information for the audience but allow the audience to contribute to the presentation of user self. The two way interactions, if viewed as a form of cultivating sensibilities, could create both positive and negative outcomes. At the same time, this multimodal interaction and the access given to the audience to contribute to the user's profiles and postings, can disrupt the user's presentation and performance of selected (including cosmopolitan) self. This audience's access is a less explored area in performance of cosmopolitanism and worth exploring for its contribution to practical everyday cosmopolitanism. In research conducted by Rui and Stefanone (2012) on self presentation on Facebook it was specified that not only do users have to worry about Self Provided Information (SPI)<sup>30</sup> but also Other Provided Information (OPI) which can directly or indirectly affect a social actor's performance and affect the impressions (s)he wishes to give and, to some degree, the given off impressions. Despite the social actor's effort in taking into consideration what is socially and culturally acceptable, OPI can disrupt this management of collapsed context because the other contributors would not have any idea on what is

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<sup>30</sup> In active social interactions as well as presentation of identity sharing information such as on about page, profile photos, and photo albums.

appropriate in the social actor's network and contexts; they would not have any idea of the friends' motivation and intention for certain updates - status updates and images for instance. Nevertheless, the asynchronicity and synchronicity capability that Facebook affords can be a useful feature in managing OPI. A social actor's presence on Facebook is undetectable due to the above mentioned capability, hence allowing him/her more time to think through and decide on the best response to the unexpected or unwanted information. There is no urgency in replying to comments on the site and this particular feature has been appropriately and successfully employed by users to handle a number of different situations, such as managing IM friends' access to a user's private time (Quan Haase and Collins, 2008). How users managed the OPI to prevent the disruptions in presentation of self and performance of cosmopolitanism is another interest of this thesis.

It has been well accepted that offline and online are no longer conceptualised as two separated spaces with no links between them (as in the work of Maria Bakardjieva, Howard Rheingold, Danah boyd and many others). Online being an extension of offline space, where a user Facebook network is based on the user offline network, of course, we will see offline unwritten guidelines on how to behave online or to use Goffman's term 'decorum' for "the way in which the performer comports himself while in visual or aural range of the audience but not necessarily engaged in talk with them" (1959: 110). The social norms are not written but are collectively understood and practiced, learned from behaviour and actions of other users; as boyd (2007) writes "(s)ocial norms emerge out of situational definitions, as people learn to read cues from the environment and the

people present to understand what is appropriate behavior". In earlier online sites, like MUDs, these social expectations or social grooming, based on offline socio-cultural expectations and conventions, may not be available due to the nature of the site that is not based on offline connections and neither does it require formal/informal identity validation through friends. It is a space to start anew (by inventing personas) without any burden from offline connections (Turkle, 1999).

What Goffman presented as a framework is a natural thing for a social individual, we learn over time of the appropriate behaviour and actions in the presence of others, similarly social interactions on Facebook follow the very same naturalistic tendency to act appropriately and present the best front. There are no written rules on how to behave on Facebook but over time, learning from other users' patterns of interactions and, seeing their effects, other users reflexively create in their minds the template of "appropriate decorum and manners online". There is indeed an unwritten social grooming on Facebook. This knowledge is useful for any user to act accordingly online. Acknowledging the existence of online social grooming and social cues, this thesis will examine the Malay Malaysian online contexts to investigate if they could create the social cues as described above and, if they do, in what ways do these social cues influence self-disclosure and self-censorship.

Despite the all-embracing capability and potential of the site in connecting people through interactions and engagements, there is a general worry on the issue of privacy arising from collapsed contexts and the growing interconnections between users, which can affect and influence self-disclosure and self-censorship. This is

reflected in the expanding literatures on privacy and online behaviour, such as the studies on how users behave when the growing connectivity social network sites such as Facebook are set to deliver, erodes their privacy and also, the effect of privacy issues on self-disclosure (Acquisti and Gross, 2006; Krasnova et al., 2009; Ellison et al., 2011; Vitak, 2012; Stutzman et al., 2011; 2012). Privacy concerns can be correlated with the growing number and the diversity of user's Facebook Friends that result in complexities in managing multiple contexts. The positive relationship between privacy, self-disclosure and self-censorship would affect performance of cosmopolitanism through the influence of privacy issues over what users are willing to share and how they share it. Due to this reason, this thesis finds it crucial to understand user's privacy issues in relation to online interactions and engagements and their privacy concept. "Privacy is a normative, subjective construct" (Stutzman, 2011: 591) thus it is imperative that this research takes into account what privacy means to the users and their privacy concerns, and how issues related to this are dealt with in order to study presentation of the cosmopolitan self on Facebook in the everyday context.

Users' privacy concerns and issues are not left untouched and unsolved. Facebook has created and made known the account and custom settings to manage users' general access to the profile and for a more personalised privacy setting; therefore users are provided with the means to make their way around the infrastructures through individualised use of these very features. While Facebook offers the unlimited capability to connect with others it also provides means to control access to one's profile and limiting social interactions. This potential application of privacy



and account settings to manage profile, rests on users' knowledge of the available settings. In terms of specific privacy settings Facebook created a number of features to allow users flexibility in organising access to their specific uploads; for example the already available friends lists to help users to start with (Close Friends, Acquaintances, and Restricted). Users can also create their own smart and custom lists, and use the Audience Selector tool. Friends Lists are for users to decide which group another user (Friends) are to be placed in. The three sets of lists Close Friends, Acquaintances and Restricted have already been calibrated for specific updates and sharing. For instance 'Acquaintances' is for friends who the user does not intend to communicate with directly everyday; therefore any updates by those in this group will not appear on the user's newsfeed. The Audience Selector tool allowing certain uploads to be directed to certain group of audience or specific user and it has the capability for post-sharing edit so the user can still edit the audience after sharing has happened (a few seconds after or even a few days after). These features give users the flexibility in managing their sharing for selected groups and over time. What Facebook features (Inbox, Chat, Status Updates, Cover Photo, Profile Photo, Cover Photos, Like button, Share button, Tagging capabilities), integrated applications (Games, Spotify, Facebook Connect, Instagram) and settings (Custom Lists, Friends List, Audience Selector Tool) offer to users is the growing potential for connecting, sharing with others in their own personalised way and while giving control to maintain access to their own profile and sharing.

All these features and capabilities described here are available for all users of Facebook but the availability of these features and the experiences offered on the

Facebook website (desktop and mobile web-browsers), Facebook application for tablet and smartphones running on different platforms (Android, Apple, Blackberry, Windows) as well as the gadgets used to access them, vary. Features and setting flexibility that are available on the website may not be similar to those on tablets or smartphones as they are running on different platforms<sup>31</sup>. Experience of users and their take on the site's privacy and features may differ according to the platforms they use. This could possibly create experiences that vary across users and create different forms of presentation of self.

What have been discussed in this section are the potential (personalised) social interactions that the site through its features, applications and settings offer. To study everyday online cosmopolitanism on Facebook, and in this section performance of cosmopolitanism in the form of presentation of self, must cover all bases from an individual user's motivation to use the site, to be a cosmopolitan individual, user's perception of stages where social interactions and presentation of self occur, the contexts and audiences, the site's affordances, to its features, privacy issues and user's perception of privacy. Analysing online cosmopolitanism, with these issues being considered, reveals performance of cosmopolitanism that is in Kendall et al.'s (2009) exact words "encouraged by particular contexts, fusions of circumstance and motive, and frames of interpretation".

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<sup>31</sup> This is based on the thesis author's own experience of using Facebook on website, smartphones and tablets over the years. The available privacy settings that can easily be customised on the website cannot be done on the Facebook application for smartphone. Users need to access the site using the website version to change the settings. This is true up until this is written.

### **3.5. Summary**

This chapter has provided a more detailed account of how the researcher plans to analyse the Malay Malaysian cosmopolitanism on Facebook. It discusses the importance of the practical everyday cosmopolitanism approach that is increasingly being acknowledged for its merits in grounding cosmopolitanism studies and the escape from earlier abstract analyses of the concept, as ‘openness to cultural differences in cultural cosmopolitanism’ to the actual practical expression of openness in an individual everyday experience. It began with the discussion on the everyday practical cosmopolitanism approach predominantly in an offline context to highlight the growth in this approach and the important element this approach advocated, which is its practical aspect. Building from this, emphasis was placed on the practicality of cosmopolitanism and the problems in assessing openness to cultural difference. In an attempt to produce interpretation and analysis of practical everyday cosmopolitanism, this chapter sets out to provide the ways in which this research plans to analyse the practical cosmopolitanism of the Malay Malaysian students’ online experiences. This thesis acknowledged and incorporated users’ experiences, motivations, choices and decisions, as well as the site’s settings, features and infrastructures to allow for both individual experiences and the site that produces the context for users’ social encounters and their ensuing experiences. This is emphasised through the analysis of the six elements pertinent to users’ online interactions: motivation, self-reflexivity, self-disclosure and self-censorship, affordances and features, collapsed contexts and audience, perception of privacy and actual privacy issues.

Rather than taking cosmopolitanism as an abstract openness to cultural differences, it was argued in this chapter for the breakdown of the concept into cosmopolitan sensibilities and cosmopolitan performance. This decision is an acknowledgement of Kendall, Skrbiš and Woodward's (2009) take on the concept that is as a discursive resources that users draw from, when needing to deal with cultural diversities for instance, and as a cultural repertoire performed according to specific contexts, frames of interpretation, motives and circumstance. Their definition emphasised the contextual, temporal, individual aspects of cosmopolitanism which complement the growing everyday practical cosmopolitanism. By separating sensibilities from actual performance, of which the latter has been given less attention except by the scholars cited, this chapter has provided analytical tools specific for each aspect of cosmopolitanism. Sensibilities in this thesis refers to thoughts and feelings of the social actor with regards to cultural differences; performances refers to sensibilities expressed by social actors according to the appropriate context and circumstances and the actor's own motivation to do so. The author has argued in this chapter that both cosmopolitan sensibilities and performances should be included in the analysis of everyday cosmopolitanism; a case discussed in the context of Facebook's social interactions and engagement as it is the site chosen for this research. In the section exploring cultivation of cosmopolitan sensibilities, users' ability to write themselves into being, sharing mundane or not so mundane everydayness on the site has been highlighted. This affordance offered by the site allows for much more materials for discursive resources to be cultivated. But what could hamper the growth of this cultural resource is the barriers created by the site's infrastructure, such as the

algorithm used to control information and updates shared on user's newsfeed and user's own (cultural) network. This limitation rests on users' own motivation to search beyond what are made available on the surface and their network, which this thesis plans to explore.

In the section that explored performances it was proposed to study performance in the form of presentation of self that is conducted during social interactions (sociabilities) and identity sharing information (exhibition), such as those on users' about page (user's like, dislikes, education, political thoughts) and profile image. To study their presentation of self, this thesis draws from Erving Goffman's Presentation of Self in Everyday Life framework, applies and extends this framework to Facebook. As this thesis recognised the different social interactions and engagements online space creates, this section discussed his framework and his stage, context, face, impression management themes in accordance to Facebook's context, features, and properties. A number of issues were brought forward during the discussion and there are questions this thesis has to answer in this study of everyday online cosmopolitanism, in order to understand how individual user's present themselves online; this will be done as a way to assess performance of cosmopolitanism. The thesis will focus on the processes involved in users' decisions to disclose and censor information in social interactions and exhibition, how they manage the complex environments (collapsed contexts) that the site has created as a result of its own affordances and features, users' perception of open and private places to assess front and back stages, their actions on both stages and managing information provided by others that could disrupt

presentation of self and the effect these have on the performance of cosmopolitanism. The next chapter discusses the suitability of the ethnographic approach for studying this everyday practical online cosmopolitanism. As this research places emphasis on the user's contextualised, individualised, temporalised experiences and performance of cosmopolitanism, the ethnographic approach allows for richer data, grounded in their everyday contexts, to be obtained.

# Chapter Four

## Researching Online Cosmopolitanism on Facebook

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### 4.1 Introduction

An ethnographic approach is chosen for this research considering its suitability in studying everyday experiences of the respondents involved in this investigation, as well as its past contributions and usefulness in researching online social interactions. An ethnographic approach for its open-ended, flexible and less structured approach is most appropriate in addressing the main research question of this research and for the nature of the subject of this study, cosmopolitanism; a subject which is elusive in its nature. In chapter two and three of this thesis, I explained that cosmopolitanism is a highly contested concept and due to the different interpretations and analyses it provokes, it cannot be grounded to fixed and definite indicators. The most common indicator used to assess cosmopolitanism is openness towards cultural others and their cultural differences; an indicator which cannot be generalised but understood in the context of an individual's experiences; openness that is individualised, contextualised, spatialised and temporalised. Taking this nature of cosmopolitanism that cannot be generalised, or fix to indicators of openness be used, the previous chapter has provided an approach to study the Malay Malaysian students' individual everyday experiences on Facebook and the potential cultivation of cosmopolitanism their

online interactions and experiences could create. Cosmopolitanism in this thesis is taken to include both sensibilities (thoughts) and performances (actions) and being dissimilar in nature. This thesis (in chapter three) provides two different analytical tools using the six dynamics of online cosmopolitanism discussed previously (motivation, affordances and features, collapsed context and audiences, self-reflexivity, self-disclosure and self-censorship and privacy) to study sensibilities and performance on Facebook. Cosmopolitan sensibilities are studied by taking into account their motivation in seeking information of others, the self-reflexivity process involved in their exposure to boundless cultural information, available affordances and features, collapsed context and audiences caused by different groups of people physically spatially located being merged together as 'Friends'. On the other hand, performances of cosmopolitanism are analysed through my participants motivations to use Facebook, to express self as a cosmopolitan, their perception of *stages*, the contexts and audiences, user's perception of privacy and privacy issues. I am not only interested in whether or not cosmopolitanism could develop through online interactions on Facebook and how they are performed but also in the meanings attached to these sensibilities and performance. As reviewed in chapter two, and reiterated in chapter three, the earlier work on Malay Malaysian cosmopolitanism, that was based on certain scholars' interpretations and observations rather than those experiences voiced by the Malays themselves, is too general. Using semi-structured interviews and online observation that allows their everyday experiences to be studied and their own experiences expressed by themselves to be gathered, I hope to provide an in-depth account of their own cosmopolitanism. As Kendall et al. (2009) suggest "ethnographic and observational



data in known context may be necessary to adjudicate on the nature of cultural judgments and appropriations made by cosmopolitans”; it should be noted the use of ethnography is also suggested by other scholars working on cosmopolitanism, such as Ong (2009) and Skey (2012). This chapter is structured and written in a way that readers would be able to follow this author’s experiences in the *field*, not only the steps taken and methods employed during the fieldwork but also the challenges faced and the reflexivity process involved before, during and after the fieldwork. Prior to this, online ethnography as an approach to study cosmopolitanism, is discussed.

## **4.2 Conducting Research Online – Researching Cosmopolitanism on Facebook.**

Online ethnography<sup>32</sup> has been applied in a number of online studies focusing on a wide range of topics such as online identity, online community and online relationships (Rheingold, 1993; Turkle, 1995; Markham, 1998; Baym, 2000; Hine, 2000; Kendall, 2002; boyd, 2006; 2008). Its application is not new; it has been

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<sup>32</sup> Also called Virtual Ethnography (Hine 2000), Cyberethnography (Ward, 1999; Kuntsman, 2004; Rybas and Gajjala, 2007; Teli, Pisanu and Hakken, 2007), Netnography (Kozinets 2010) to name a few. Choice of terminology for this ethnographic approach online depends on the researcher’s conceptualisation of the online space, methods and steps taken in executing their research plans. For instance the term Virtual Ethnography that is probably the first terminology to label ethnography that is conducted online is regarded by some scholars such as (Teli, Pisanu and Hakken (2007)) to suggest separation between online space and offline (real) space due to Hine’s use of the word *virtual*. For them this term is inappropriate considering that now online is as real as offline. Thus they prefer the use of Cyberethnography to label online ethnography. New terms, more appropriate to the current conceptualisation of the online space intertwined with offline and the subject studied, continue to be developed.

successfully applied and recognised for its usefulness in studying online interactions and behaviour, although the number of ethnographic and qualitative studies is low in comparison to online quantitative research employing methods such as surveys, visualisation and social network analysis (Garcia et al., 2009). These aforementioned methods are used to study different online topics, for instance personality influence on Facebook use, self-disclosure online, self-presentation, and users' social network (Papacharissi, 2011; Moore and McElroy, 2012; Nosko et al., 2012; Chen and Marcus, 2012; Bachrach et al., 2012). The choice I made in selecting online ethnography for studying cosmopolitanism on Facebook is influenced by my conceptualisation of online space (Dominguez et al., 2007), specifically Facebook, as a place where everyday life is experienced; online ethnography is known for its suitability in studying such experiences (Hine, 2000). Online and offline spaces were previously conceptualised respectively as unreal and real but now both have been recognised to be mutually constitutive and real as Markham (1998: 115-116) elucidates "(r)real and its opposite, not real, are becoming less valid frames, not because we are not having real experiences, but because online our experiences cannot be classified into binary states...every experience is real as another...(f)or most of us, every experience is an experience, to the extent that it is lived". Therefore conceptually seeing them as worlds apart and studying online space in isolation from offline experiences restricts research and a researcher's attempts to understand the social complexities of societies (Miller and Slater, 2000; Bakardjieva, 2003). It has become "essential to study everyday life on the internet as a crucial part of communication processes today" (Beneito-Montagut, 2011: 731), especially as technology is portrayed as intrinsically social (Hine cited in Markham and Baym,

2009: 3; similar view is also posited by Crang et al., 1999). It is important to note that this research does not commit to a specific type of ethnographic approach online or specific term (such as Virtual Ethnography, Cyberethnography, Netnography) but uses online ethnography or an ethnographic approach online interchangeably throughout this chapter.

What does an ethnographer do? For Miller and Slater (2000: 21) ethnography is 'a long-term involvement amongst people, through a variety of methods, such that any one aspect of their lives can be properly contextualised in others'. A long term-involvement requires the researcher to enter a site, observe the location, situation, members of the group studied, interpreting and make sense of their actions and interactions, searching for meanings of these activities, taking field notes and analysing findings. These processes, reiterative and non-linear, of entering and doing fieldwork experienced by an ethnographer offline are also experienced by an ethnographer conducting online ethnographic research. However due to the different contexts, infrastructures and affordances online spaces have, ethnography online differs in several ways. For instance, selection of site is not necessarily bound to one single location but could be multi-sited due to the nature of online sites' connectivity, flow of information and users' online activities that are not bound within a single online site (Burrell, 2009). This issue of defining site will be discussed in a later section – Site Selection. It is with these online contexts in mind that this study is designed and negotiated.

I am interested in finding whether cosmopolitanism can be cultivated and developed on Facebook and if so, how openness, flexibility and tolerance to cultural others are expressed on the site. The term, being elusive and not open to being generalised, requires a research design that allows individual cosmopolitanism to be expressed. It is through an ethnographic approach that this main research question is best answered. Chapter three has provided a framework and analytical tools to study the Malay Malaysian students' cosmopolitanism. It separates cosmopolitanism into sensibilities (thoughts and feelings) and performance (actions) in which the latter is in the form of sociabilities (social interactions) and exhibition (identity sharing information). The processes involved in both aspects of cosmopolitanism differ and they require specific analytical tools to answer the research question. Cosmopolitan sensibilities are studied by using some of the six dynamics of online cosmopolitanism discussed in previous chapters and mentioned above: motivation, self-reflexivity, affordances and features, and collapsed contexts and audience. Asking questions pertaining to the types of information available to users; the materials that are *pushed* to the users; what they reflexively absorb and motivation to engage with the information; and materials available on Facebook, allow not only the available discursive resources users draw from to be understood, but also the types of information that are reflexively selected. Performance of cosmopolitanism is studied by taking into account the Malay Malaysian students' motivation to use the site, their perception of *stages* where interactions occur, affordances and features, collapsed contexts and audience, privacy issues and user's perception of privacy. Research methods selected must be able to help answer the questions – what users consider as open and private places; how (and

why) they act on these spaces; motivations to use the site; how they managed collapsed contexts and maintain their performance of self and identity; how they manage 'other provided information' (OPI) to prevent disruptions in their presentation of self; how their social cues and context influence their self-disclosure and self-censorship; what they define as privacy, their privacy concerns, and how issues related to their privacy concerns are dealt with. For this performance of cosmopolitanism I am particularly interested in the information they disclose and censor.

This research relies largely on interviews to elicit actions, selections, decisions, and the meanings behind them; their use of Facebook and its features; and cosmopolitanism that is expressed by the respondents themselves rather than relying solely on my observations. This thesis places a great deal of importance on openness that is expressed by the individuals themselves, hence quantitative research methods using network analysis, questionnaire surveys with close-ended questions are not adequate to help answer the research questions. It is acknowledged that such research methods could provide an immense amount of representative data of the population, such as in the work of Wellman et al. (2001), Lewis et al. (2008) on specific topics of online use and Norris and Inglehart (2009) on cosmopolitanism communication. They provide general patterns of online use and on cosmopolitanism respectively. However, this thesis is focused on individual experiences that such methods cannot provide it with. A long-term online

observation<sup>33</sup>, a cornerstone of ethnographic research, is employed to observe users' presentation of self; findings which are also useful for the interviews when they talk about their experiences and actions within context, and useful for the researcher to observe the discrepancies in their actions and to confirm their online actions and behaviour. Sociabilities and exhibition in the forms of general topics of interactions and information disclosed are observed and interpreted through online observation. Meanings, motivations and self-censorship in this research cannot be studied using online observation alone but require interviews to elicit these from the respondents. A combination of interview and online observation allows both sensibilities and performance to be studied and to answer the main research question of this thesis.

### **4.3 The Researcher – Both an Insider and an Outsider**

A researcher is never detached from their study (Mohammad, 2001; Crang and Cook, 2007). The researcher's experiences and subjective inputs are valuable in their study despite being labelled as unscientific and subject to bias. The initial

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<sup>33</sup> The common label for observation conducted offline or online is participant observation. Despite title participant preceding the observation, it is not necessary for researchers to become actively involved in the life of the respondents studied but could remain as silent observers. Participation is not compulsory in the ethnographic approach and a researcher can decide to participate or just to observe (Boelstroff, 2012: 80). My involvement in my respondents' everyday lives on Facebook is minimal and I was a silent (in some cases known by respondents) observer and, as an active long time use of Facebook, my observation online would resonate more with Walstrom's (2004a/b cited in Gargia et al., 2009: 58) term "participant-experiencer" or what I would consider a participant-experiencer-observer, so as to include both experience and observation. In this chapter, I use online observation to refer to this participant observation method.

interest in this research developed out of my own experience in using Facebook everyday (2006 – 2010) when I was a student pursuing my Masters Degree in one of the universities in the United Kingdom, later as a young lecturer at Universiti Brunei Darussalam and back to being a student pursuing my PhD at Durham University. Looking back at how I have used Facebook, the features I opted to employ to communicate with others, the thoughts I had of my own Facebook activities (including regrets and misinterpretations) and those of others, what I found acceptable and what was not, influenced this research and my conceptualisation of online sites, such as Facebook. This familiarity with the site brought to the research both challenges and advantages. Over familiarity resulted in taking the mundane for granted and overlooking matters which are important to others, which needed to be monitored and analysed (Boelstroff et al., 2012). Nevertheless, it also puts me in an advantageous position – as an insider; not just as a Facebook user but also as a Malay Muslim student staying in the United Kingdom. What contributes to (and influences) this research is not only my familiarity with the site and the workings of social network sites, based on my years of experience as a user, but also my identity as a Malay, Muslim international student (also a young and inexperienced lecturer on study leave just like some of my respondents) in the United Kingdom, who uses Facebook on a daily basis to communicate with family and friends back home in Brunei<sup>34</sup>. A researcher's experiences and reflexivity inevitably inform the research and provide valuable input to shaping their research design and its trajectory (Hopkins, 2007).

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<sup>34</sup> Brunei Darussalam is a Muslim country with Malaysians making up more than half of the population and has a similar socio-cultural context as Malaysia. As a Brunei Malay Muslim, I understand and share similar socio-cultural convention with the Malaysian Malay Muslim I study in this research. In this case I am an insider but also an outsider.

Prior to the formal enrolment into the PhD program, I took note of features that I have not used and the reasons behind what I have shared and how other users differ. I was 'reading' others while observing their actions and behaviours on the site. I asked (myself) why they did certain things and why they shared certain things and finally (for my own sake) arriving at a conclusion for each individual friend I observed. This early reflexive study of my own Facebook use and experience allowed me to understand the site and find potential ideas to concentrate on. Academically, I was interested in the socio-cultural activities, processes going on inside Facebook and online-offline identity contestation. As a user of the site since 2006, I have witnessed and experienced scores of activities that were not described by Facebook when I signed up for a profile. Facebook is created to connect people and as a social networking site and it aims to grow users' connections. What is occurring on the site reflects individuals' appropriation of the infrastructure, the features and affordances it offers within their own socio-cultural contexts. How did a supposedly neutral site like Facebook become a place where socio-cultural practices and contexts are applied and emphasised? I was interested in what was going on behind a user's profile and social (multimodal) interactions. As a long-term Facebook user and having spent a lot of time on online sites such as MySpace, Hi5, Friendster<sup>35</sup>, mIRC<sup>36</sup> and eventually migrating to Facebook and other online

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<sup>35</sup> Friendster used to be a social networking site like MySpace and Hi5 but it has recently been re-launched as an online gaming site. It was still a social networking site during my active use of the site.

<sup>36</sup> mIRC is a "full featured **Internet Relay Chat** client for Windows that can be used to communicate, share, play or work with others on IRC networks around the world, either in multi-user group conferences or in one-to-one private discussions" (source: <http://www.mirc.co.uk/about.html>)



sites such as Google Blog, I was not only quite literate in navigating the complex social networking sites (and their specific privacy issues) but that online engagement had provided me with nearly a decade of online experiences (within my own socio-cultural contexts) prior to the start of the research<sup>37</sup>. As Boelstroff et al. (2012: 73) advise, an ethnographer needs to prepare his or her 'self' which includes 'technical proficiency'. My personal experiences proved to be valuable in my research (boyd, 2008); my own experiences led me to question my own use of Facebook and social media in general and how differently other users use theirs. It is also from informal conversation with friends about our own Facebook activities and (un)intentionally overhearing people's conversation in public that I get more ideas to work with, demonstrating two important points made throughout this thesis (and this chapter). One, the online and offline are not actually regarded as worlds apart; and two, a researcher is not detached from his/her study. This long-term engagement prior to the onset of the initial fieldwork has provided an understanding and familiarity of the site, its features, what it can offer and my conceptualisation of Facebook as a socio-cultural space. These perceptions are supported by the literature reviews I conducted, hence enabling me to draft initial questions about Facebook use and social interactions, which are important in studying cosmopolitanism as openness is experienced and expressed in our everyday life and, in this study, in the students' everyday use of Facebook. I questioned:

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<sup>37</sup> Although, I am a long-term user of online sites and familiar with the infrastructure and features, the nature of the online sites especially their constant updates, forced me to be cognisant of the changes on the sites.

- 1) What people update on their profile? Why they post certain status updates and to whom they are directed?
- 2) What types of photos are uploaded? The frequency of updates and the audience?
- 3) Who are their Facebook friends? Where are they from? Are they mostly online friends? Are they also part of the users' offline network?
- 4) Their identity on Facebook and offline. Do they complement each other?
- 5) What expressions of openness are shown by users on Facebook? What processes are involved in creating an open individual (not necessarily cosmopolitan)?

I entered my subject of study as a Bruneian, Malay Muslim woman, an international student, a long-term user of social networking sites, a young lecturer, a mother, a wife and with my own sets of assumptions and questions shaped by my experiences and readings. I was both an insider and an outsider, which shaped my conceptual thinking, my fieldwork and the analyses later on. These identities also influence the dynamic relationship between the researcher and the respondents, which will be discussed later using my experiences while conducting the fieldwork.

#### **4.4 Preliminary Fieldwork**

The preliminary fieldwork, conducted between April and June 2011 prior to the main fieldwork, was designed to test the feasibility of the study: the research

questions, the methods I have chosen, the recruitment process and the respondents for the study. The pilot study aims to explore Malaysian youth online and offline interactions and their link to these youth's openness to others (within their own country). It involved analysing youth's activities and interactions within Facebook and to see how these are reflected by youth and brought forward into the offline (real life) environment. In this pilot study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with respondents and online observation<sup>38</sup> of any Malaysians with an open Facebook account. At this stage I did not place any ethnicity restriction on my potential respondents. Any Malaysian students (Malay, Chinese or Indian) from the age of 18 – 34 were accepted at this stage. The decision to keep the ethnicity open was to cast the net wider (Crang and Cook, 2007) and not restrict the potential study at a very early stage, especially when it was the stage to test out my initial research design. In total 7 Malaysians (4 Malay Female, 1 Malay Male and 2 Chinese Female) responded and agreed to be interviewed. I listed a number of methods on the information sheet I sent out to potential respondents prior to the study, which included a semi-structured interview, participant observation, focus group meeting and diary keeping (see Appendix 1, Page 318-319). However, due to the poor response and their reluctance to become involved with the last two methods listed here, except for interviews and observation, I omitted them from the main study and used only interviews and participant observation as my main methods for data gathering. Inclusion of both methods would provide different sets of data to work

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<sup>38</sup> Observation of Facebook users (not just Malaysians) started before this study even began. As a user of Facebook, my everyday use of the site and my observation of users' activities can be considered as participant observation. This is an on-going activity that was conducted prior to the study, during and after the study.

with. For instance, the use of a diary could provide a more detailed long-term account of respondents' daily actions and thoughts of their Facebook interactions which could supplement the findings to be obtained from other methods. Having a diary would also allow changes over time to be observed based on the respondents' own account of their usage and reflexivity process involved (Zimmerman and Wieder, 1977; Sleeper et al., 2013).

The formal approach to recruiting respondents that I took during this stage, I felt was not inviting and relaxing enough to study Facebook, which is used by the respondents informally and semi-formally<sup>39</sup>. The interviews conducted were more formal than I had anticipated which I felt was due, at least in part, to the formal recruitment process I took (by sending the formal information sheet and formal consent letter (see Appendix 2, Page 320) to respondents who already agreed, via the official university e-mail, to participate in the study). This also resulted in more structured answers than I had anticipated. Structured answers from respondents did not allow me to dig deeper into what meanings are attached to their social interactions, use of Facebook and cosmopolitanism. The term cosmopolitanism is not an everyday term that lay people would have used and, being a term that is highly contested, how an individual understands it will vary. Throwing this term to the respondents and using the label 'cosmopolitan'<sup>40</sup> to elicit their openness to cultural and racial differences was not useful and proved to be an obstacle. It created confusion and did not allow respondents to express their own

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<sup>39</sup> Semi-formal in this case refers to the use of Facebook for academic purposes and work.

<sup>40</sup> A large number of the participants in the study (Pilot and Main study) admitted they have never heard of the term cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan and only a small number have heard of it but relate it to the international magazine 'Cosmopolitan'.

understanding of openness and how it is experienced. Taking all these issues and challenges into consideration, the main study was designed in such a way that the interviews were more relaxed, conversational rather than formal and structured. Openness cannot be directly measured in this research that emphasises the user's own voice and expression; thus the interview question prompts were designed in a way that allows openness to be studied both directly and indirectly, depending on the situation, through their everyday experiences on Facebook. My initial observation and assumptions of the site and social activities on the site were not entirely supported. A number of my assumptions, such as users involved in creating a persona that best presents themselves to their friends, although what they share might not be an absolute truth, was contested by the findings obtained through interviews. There is a huge theme on staying true to oneself, which is also prevalent in the main study<sup>41</sup>. The initial site selection, Facebook, remains as there are enough findings to support that those activities conducted on the site are significant to users' identity constructions and experiences; hence to this research on cosmopolitanism. Despite the challenges faced, the pilot study brings to the front matters pertinent to cosmopolitanism, which are important to be delved into further, to understand the context of the respondents to be studied. For instance, the students' Facebook Friends majority are from their own ethnic group – Malay (Muslim) creating an ethnically dominated network which, in turn, shapes their online interactions and behaviours. To study their specific cosmopolitanism, the

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<sup>41</sup> Even if they do alter the truth to create a good impression of themselves I would not be able to know. This altering of the answers I assumed is due to my insider identity – a Malay Muslim that somehow places them in a situation where they have to present self that is “acceptable” to another Malay Muslim. This needs to be accepted by, and acceptable to, one's own group is discussed in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

researcher must be cognisant of matters such as these and those matters to be incorporated in the main fieldwork to be further explored and analysed. Participant observation conducted during the pilot study also showed that Facebook use and preferences are individualised and personal attachment to the site also varies. Lessons learned from the pilot study were appropriated in the design and actual conduct of the main study, which I will revisit briefly in the next section.

#### **4.5 Main Study**

The main study commenced in November 2011 and formally came to an end in April 2012. Observation on Facebook continued to be conducted for a few months after the formal main study ended. This research had a total of 40 Malaysians international students (7 recruited for the pilot study, remaining 33 participants recruited for the main study) who at the time of research were either pursuing their undergraduate or postgraduate studies in a number of universities in the United Kingdom (Refer to Appendix 5A and 5B). The undergraduate students were spread out in different academic years. The postgraduate students were either pursuing their Masters or PhD Degrees. This group of respondent was highly dominated by Malay (all the Malay Malaysians in this research are Muslim) ethnic group due to the low response from Chinese Malaysians. Out of the total of 33 respondents in the main study only 2 are Chinese Malaysians. These Malaysian students came from different parts of West and East Malaysia (urban areas and villages) and majority have never been to the UK before this. Only few PhD postgraduate participants claimed that they have been to the UK pursuing their First Degree or Masters

Degree. The individuals participated in the study were between the ages of 15 to 40. In total, 32 participants were between the ages of 20-30, while only 1 below 20, 4 between the ages of 30-40, and only 3 were aged 40. Thus the experiences of those between the ages of 20-30 are highly represented in this research. The nature of the participants has shaped the research findings.

This section presents the main study of this research – the decision to continue studying cosmopolitanism on Facebook and the specific features selected to be included in the online observation, selection of respondents and the recruitment process (and its challenges), selection of methods and analysis of the data. Limitations of this research and its ethical issues are discussed here as well.

#### **4.5.1 Site Selection**

It has been advised by a number of scholars that when doing ethnography, the limit or boundaries of the field site should not be defined prior to the study (such as by Hine, 2000; Leander and McKim et al., 2003; Markham, 2004; and Burrell, 2009). Keeping it open allows an ethnographer to reach places which are significant to the respondents as Olwig and Hastrup (1997: 8 cited in Leander and McKim (2003: 214) suggest 'ethnographers might still start from a particular place, but would be encouraged to follow connections which were made meaningful from that setting'. In this research, the site of study is set to Facebook for a number of reasons. First, the aim of this research is to study cosmopolitanism on Facebook to explore the potential of this site, considering its social networking features, not experiences in

online spaces or online sites in general. Second, the growing number of Malaysian users of this social network site, and its increasing popularity, as revealed in chapter two, justify the selection of this site. Third, the findings from the pilot study support the significance of the site in the respondents' everyday activities, which is noteworthy to explore. Despite appearing as spatially confined, conducting research on users' Facebook interactions is not bounded but it is similar to what Marcus (1995 cited in Boellstorff et al., 2012) has proposed for an ethnographic study, that is to follow the person or the object<sup>42</sup>. Observing the respondents' Facebook social interactions involved the researcher following the trail of their interactions within the site (which is limited to accessible features such as their friends' open Facebook profile and open pages<sup>43</sup>) and sometimes outside. One example of this following the subject is the observation I conducted on one respondent's activities on her Photo Albums which led me to visit her father's Facebook profile to observe their social interactions and making sense of her actions on her own Facebook page. The findings suggested that interactions between two users on different profiles are shaping their individual experiences and use of the site. In such cases, the notion of field site as bounded is contested. It is bounded in a sense that it is restricted to Facebook social interactions but within the site itself the researcher has to move around, following the visible social interactions of respondents. Restricting the study on Facebook is wise for preventing a boundaryless study; however what I found during the study (pilot and main) was the constant references the respondents made to offline experiences

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<sup>42</sup> Multi-sited ethnographic work that includes mediated and unmediated environments is increasingly employed in online research to deal with such restrictive field sites (such as boyd, 2008)

<sup>43</sup> Their activities in private messages and on closed profiles are not possible to observe.



(while they were in Malaysia and in the UK), which led me to take note of the flow of their activities outside of Facebook<sup>44</sup>. During the fieldwork, I considered adding an offline observation element into the research design but later decided to solely focus on online space (because of the main research question of this thesis that centres on Facebook), while recognising the offline experiences as significant in shaping users' experiences as a whole and incorporating them in the analyses. There is one important point I wish to highlight with regards to following the respondents online. By following a respondent, I arrived at her father's Facebook page where her interactions there allowed me to make sense of her activities on her own profile. These findings are valuable to this research and looking back at the argument made on the significance of "following" respondents previously this action is justified. However, this action could place the researcher in a situation where an ethical issue could be brought up. The respondent's father has not given the researcher consent to study his social interactions on the site and to look into his album for research purpose. In such situation, the researcher is placed in a dilemma of following or not following the respondents. Taking into consideration the nature of online social interactions that fleet from one site/space to another, this action should not be an issue. However, considering the issue of privacy this does highlight a potential ethical issue. The nature of the online sites/spaces itself led to this dilemma. Having an open to public Facebook profile does not indicate a user's consent to be used as a research subject. This dilemma of following

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<sup>44</sup> I also acknowledged that online and offline are not detached and should not be regarded as experienced separately in their everyday life. Hence, online studies need to incorporate the offline elements to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the subject studied. This is also for the offline studies that it could no longer be exclusive and excluding online experiences (also discussed in previous chapters).

respondents and assessing open to public Facebook profiles are also highlighted in the next section on lurking vs observation.

The empirical chapters of this thesis will discuss this online-offline experience as mutually constitutive and that not everything (cosmopolitan experiences and the discursive resources they have) is from Facebook (chapter six). Chapter six will conclude the potential and limit of online sites, particularly Facebook, for cultivating cosmopolitan sensibilities. It is also common for a researcher, the ethnographer, to define the stages, drawing lines of what to include and to exclude when defining the site of inquiry (Katz, 1994; Burrell, 2009). Referring to Goffman's (1959) back and front spaces offline, as discussed in the previous chapter, we know that some places are known to be public and private which can be conceptualised as front and back stages respectively. However these public and private places have their temporal (situational) aspects that can lead them to perform the opposite function. In the case of this research, defining a site strictly as public (front) and private (back) is futile due to the fact that individuals' understanding of what is public and private, front and back might differ and they have their own contexts and temporal aspects attached to them. Not only is the researcher presented with multiple sites, the researcher also has to deal with the variations in what is public, private, front, and back on Facebook. In this situation, the field work was not pre-defined and restricted but was in fact *following* the individuals in this study and anticipating multiple sites within the site.

In this research I directed my attention and questions to certain features and applications on Facebook while also keeping my eyes and ears open to other possible (newly added) features on the site. Profile (also called Wall and Timeline), Profile Pictures, Cover Photos, Photo Album, Like, Chat, Groups, Events, Message and Inbox, Newsfeed and Facebook Mobile (see Appendix 4, Page 323-326) are the basic features that shaped users' interactions. Through these features relationships and connections are managed and maintained. These features are also referred to quite often by my respondents in the pilot study, suggesting the usefulness and to some extent the importance of these features in their everyday lives. The findings from the pilot study showed that an individual's use of Facebook is selective depending on their preferences, ease of use, knowledge of the available features and their audiences. Profile (including profile picture, cover photo) is frequently referred to as that is the feature on Facebook that is constantly updated while other features such as Messages, Groups, Chat, Like, Events, and Newsfeed are also utilised. Through an understanding and analyses of the usage of the features and applications within their everyday socio-cultural context, I was able to comprehend the inner workings of their online social interactions. Knowing what those features and settings are, what they offer and experiencing them in my own use of the site, prior to the study, proved to be valuable to the research. Not knowing what these features are can adversely affect the design and the conduct of the investigation (Hine 2005: 2).

#### **4.5.2 Presenting Self as a Researcher Online and Offline**

Prior to the fieldwork I was concerned with a number of matters related to my presentation of self to potential respondents. Due to the nature of this research being conducted both offline and online I had to deal with self-presentation in both spaces. Online space because of the absence of physical markers, relies heavily on the Facebook profile I created, which is one of the means to connect with Facebook users. Entering Facebook as a researcher, I decided to present myself in a way that potential respondents would (hopefully) find me unthreatening, trustworthy, and honest. To avoid the complexities of having my friends, family and respondents on the same Facebook account, I created a new profile designed to emphasise my identity as a researcher. I included detailed education and work information, which I felt was necessary to create a legitimate looking profile to give an impression that this research is serious (but also relaxed) and not a spam, considering that anything can be created online such as a fake profile, fraud, and identity theft (refer to Figure 1). To complete my research Facebook profile, I selected a neutral profile photo and a cover photo, which I changed regularly to show that I was active on Facebook although I did not update my status or upload photos (refer to Figure 2). This way I was able to negotiate my presence and absence and to maintain a stable presence (Hine, 2005). For the profile and cover photos I chose to upload photos that are not personal but still reflect my interest to avoid presenting myself as too detached or “made-up” to my potential respondents who possibly on their own add me as a friend on Facebook<sup>45</sup>. These photos in my opinion are neutral and not controversial

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<sup>45</sup> One of the profile and cover photos (Louis Vuitton handbags) I uploaded on my profile became a topic of interest to one of my respondents. As a collector of Louis Vuitton collection like me, those photos caught her interest and we spent quite some time discussing handbag prices and new collections. Although this conversation is out of the

which my respondents should find acceptable for a Malay Muslim or for any individual. I also avoided uploading photos related to Islam due to my concern that the “Muslim” self that I might present directly or indirectly would affect our conversations<sup>46</sup>. The decision to refrain from uploading a photo of myself is because of my personal preferences. I was in dilemma as to what and how much to disclose and censor, which I felt important in attracting or pushing away potential respondents and most importantly, how online behaviour and presentation of self is actively co-constructing my respondent’s identity, the context of the study and my identity (Markham, 2004). What I chose to censor unintentionally became a topic of interest by one respondent. I did not disclose my Bruneian nationality explicitly to my respondents but my work and education details on my Facebook page should provide a hint that I am Bruneian. Towards the end of the interview, Ahmad asked me if I am a Malaysian, when I told him I am a Bruneian he paused and asked “You are a Bruneian but why are you doing a research on Malaysia and Malaysians?” I was taken aback by the question and did not realise that nationality matters between the researcher and the subject in this study<sup>47</sup>. The question could have been an honest question without any hidden meanings but it did haunt me for

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topic of the research, it allows me to create a connection with my respondent and that made the interview more conversational, as I had hoped.

<sup>46</sup> According to Goffman (1959) how an individual responds in a social interaction depends on the impression the other party gives and has given off and that social actors are always involved in creating a good impression of themselves. This becomes a concern for me that my “Muslim” self would influence how they respond to my questions. Social grooming on Facebook as discussed in the literature, and based on my experiences over the years being a Facebook user, have shown how users’ actions are very much attuned to the socio-cultural contexts and expectations of their members.

<sup>47</sup> Malay Bruneians and Malay Malaysians names are similar. The name Mazidah I used when contacting potential respondents could have been mistaken by my respondents for a Malay Malaysian name. As I can speak a bit of Bahasa Malaysia I used it during the interviews which could have signalled a Malay Malaysian identity.

a while. Am I deceiving my respondents by not telling them I am a Bruneian and does it matter if I do or do not? I wondered what his responses would have been if he had known my nationality prior to the interview. This highlights the power relations between researcher and the subject of study, an issue which has been reported and discussed plentifully in academia (Rose, 1997; Hopkins, 2007). My actual identity/assumed identity could well have influenced their answer. Would a Malay Malaysian researcher or researchers from different ethnic groups be able to elicit similar answers from the respondents? Would being a male or female change the direction of this research? In this research differences and similarities are interwoven and negotiated according to the contexts (Hopkins, 2007).

Adding or accepting respondents as Friends on Facebook in order to obtain data subjected the researcher to a number of dilemmas and ethical issues, coming from the site's infrastructure and the potential blurring of the researcher and the respondents relationships. First, once accepted as a Friend does the researcher act as a friend; commenting, liking their updates or does the researcher refrain from being actively involved and resort to doing a silent visible observation using the Friend status? I decided to not become actively involved with my respondents Facebook activities, except for a number of respondents who I became friends with offline and online. Second, leaving the site and respondents once the research is completed proved to be a problem. How does one leave when one has been accepted as a Facebook Friend? Unfriending option is available but the after effect of that action will bring discomfort to both researcher and respondent. This unfriending action highlights an interesting aspect of online friendship to explore

further, because it demonstrates the loose notion of online friendship, which chapter five will discuss. It also questions the separation and interconnectedness between online and offline spaces and experiences. Offline and online are no longer detached and in this case removing a friend's access to one's profile online, in some ways reflects one's offline commitment to a relationship. Nevertheless retracting access to one's profile online cannot indicate a refusal to communicate online. It has been advised by a number of ethnographers that the researcher should leave the site in a proper way and extra care should be taken to avoid tarnishing the reputation of a researcher, in that future research could be hampered as a result. In this case, leaving the site as a Facebook user (or as a Facebook Friend) is not an option but I had left the site as a researcher, although no proper goodbyes had been said except at the end of each interview. My respondents remain on my research Facebook as F/friends. Third, by accepting or adding respondents on Facebook the researcher's profile will be available to them. What line should be drawn on what to share so respondents feel at equal level, not simply being on the receiving end of a researcher picking all the small bits of their everyday lives and analysing them. As I have discussed earlier, I managed my profile by carefully filtering information disclosed and updated less personal information but enough to reflect my interest and not being too detached. Due to its purpose as a research Facebook profile I have refrained from updating too much personal information. Fourth, one of the methods in this research, online observation, involved the researcher spending time observing or *lurking*<sup>48</sup> on the site. The

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<sup>48</sup> Lurking is an Internet lingo that refers to the action of observing people's activities online without making 'self' (oneself) known to them.

matter of privacy is less an issue when observation is conducted with the knowledge of the respondents but when it is conducted covertly the researcher is presented with a dilemma and ethical issue. How can the observation be conducted, whilst at the same time ensuring the observed's privacy is un-breached. This ethical issue with regards to online observation or lurking has been addressed by a number of scholars who came up with different conclusions. For some lurking without asking the permission of respondents is acceptable and for some others this action is considered unethical and some provided recommendations according to the site the researcher plans to study (see Sveningsson, 2008 for such recommendations). An open to public Facebook profile does not mean that the users agree to be observed and analysed (but interestingly we do this everyday on our F/friends Facebook profile; we observe and make our own judgments based on what we read online). However, lurking is common in online spaces and the users are aware of the lurkers, who are sometimes called the invisible audience. This also questions the difference between observation and lurking. In essence, they are similar in the way an individual observes another, but in the former the action of observing others appears valid because of the academic reasons for such actions. In my experiences, I found myself fleeting between conducting academic observation and lurking and sometimes doing both concurrently; in fact it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two. Nevertheless, whether a researcher is conducting an academic observation or lurking, the privacy issues are equally pertinent. To deal with this privacy concern, for those profiles that were open and observed before obtaining their permission, I tried as much as possible to reiterate that I have seen their Facebook profile and noticed some of the updates that I found important to



bring forward during the interview. This tells my respondents that I have indeed visited their profile and *lurked* around. Likewise, this reiteration is also done to respondents who have added me as their Facebook friend and given me the rights to view their profiles as a friend.

All in all, presentation of self not only needs to be managed online through the Facebook profile, information disclosed, and interactions but also offline. There is no clear boundary between my presentation of self online and offline in this study. The online self I wish to present (a researcher) has to complement my offline presentation of self, as both will be used by my respondents as reference to my identity. Offline presentation of self here refers to my physical self when I conduct face to face interviews and/or also an audio interview via Skype, which allow respondents to *listen to/read* my identity and self.

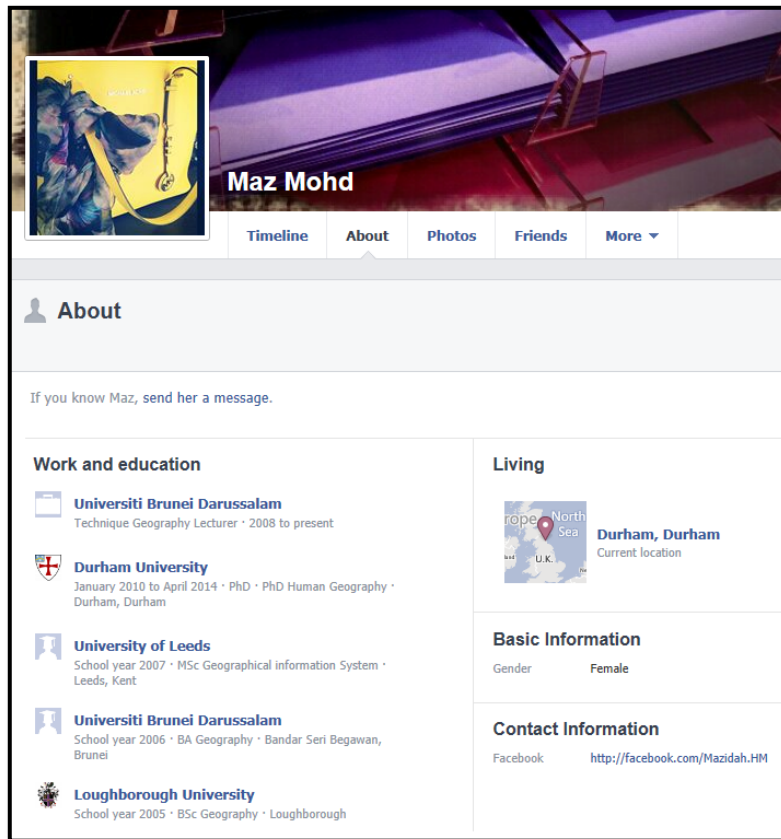


Figure 1 Researcher's About Page on Facebook

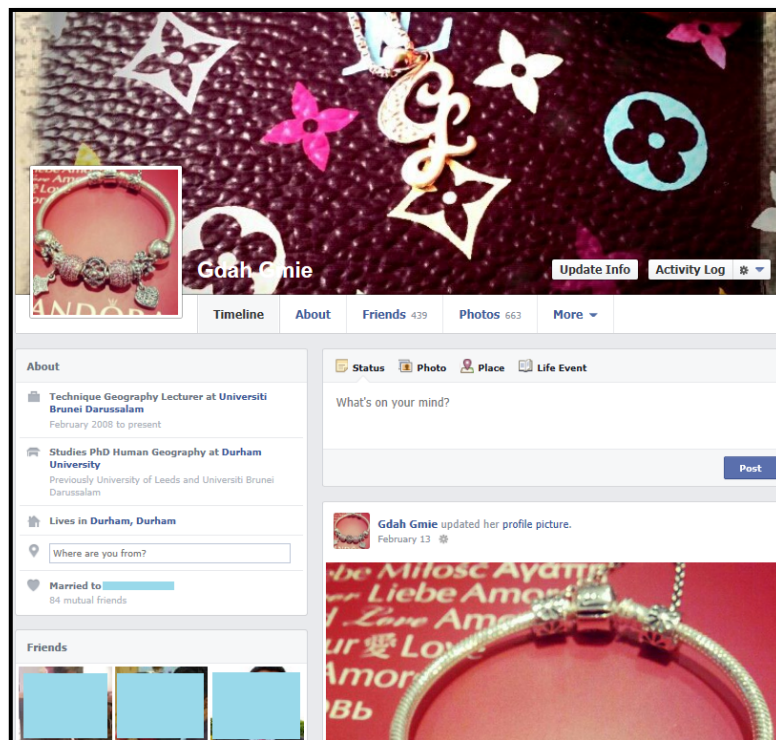


Figure 2 Researcher's Facebook Profile

### 4.5.3 Respondents – Selection of Respondents and Recruitment Process

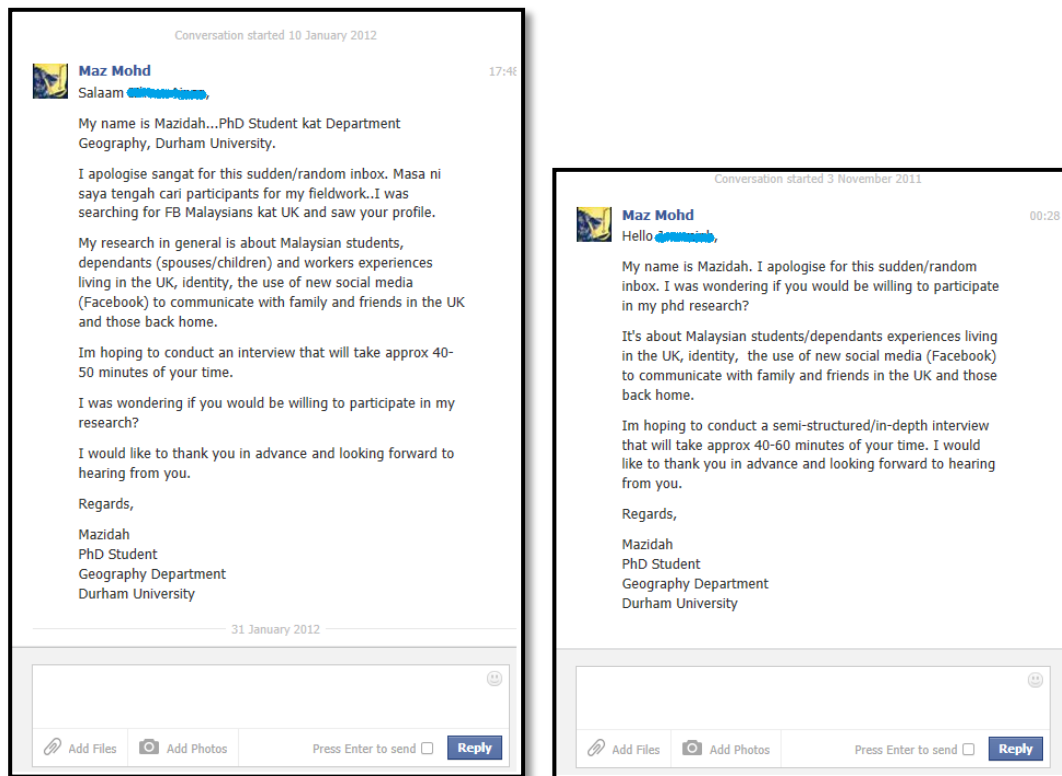
Similar to the pilot study this main fieldwork opens the selection of respondents to any Malaysians students currently in the United Kingdom who are between the ages of 18 to 40<sup>49</sup>. To get this study rolling, I started with the search for point of contact to connect me with Malaysian students in Durham. Through my Bruneian friends in Durham I was able to get in touch with a number of postgraduate Malaysian students (their housemates and course mates) who in turn continued to help me to connect with their friends within and outside of Durham. I also used Facebook to find potential respondents and using the Message feature to introduce myself, my study and asked for their help. Such Facebook features are not only the focus of the research but its communication feature can become an affordance for a researcher to potentially get in touch with other would-be respondents. In this research, Facebook affordances are not only studied in relation to cosmopolitanism (the site itself as a research site) but they also proved to be useful for this study as a research tool; for instance, conducting observation of offline activities shared on Facebook and getting respondents for this research.

Learning from the problems associated with the formal approach I had taken in the pilot study, the introduction to the study and the mode of recruiting respondents were purposively made as semi-formal/informal. I sent a short message to active and potentially active 128 Malaysians on Facebook whose accounts were open at

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<sup>49</sup> This age categorisation 18 – 40 follows the age-group of Youth in Malaysia that is between the ages of 15 – 40. Age 18 is chosen as the minimum age of respondents to follow the average age of students entering university.

that time and those who have shared a sufficient amount of information to be assumed as active, to introduce the study and the reason for doing the research (refer to Figure 3). Out of the 128 messages I sent only 20 replied and agreed to participate in this study. A very small number replied after the formal study has ended and admitted that they had just realised there is an inbox message sent to them which was sent to their Message's Other folder instead of the main Message folder. There was no response from the rest of the Facebook users contacted whom I assume were not interested in this research or are not active on Facebook or were similar to the situation of the other users whose messages were sent to their Other folder. The rest are from offline recruitment. Out of the total of 33 respondents (14 Undergraduates and 19 Postgraduates) in the main study only 2 are Chinese Malaysians, which did not provide enough material to provide data from different racial groups' accounts of cosmopolitanism. The responses led to this highly ethnicised (Malay Malaysian) analysis; a population not easy to defend against accusations of population bias. This limits the research in a way that different ethnic groups's account of cosmopolitanism, and potential relations between them, cannot be studied. Despite this limitation, the narrowed down focus allowed more grounds to be covered and analyses deepened within the Malay Malaysian context.



**Figure 3 Samples of Informal Respondents Recruitment on Facebook (Message)**

#### 4.5.4 Method 1 – Interviews

A combination of online and offline interviews (with an average time of an hour and some interviews lasting up to 2 hours) were used in the main study. Skype interviews were conducted with respondents who were not based in Durham and Newcastle and who were difficult to meet face to face. It was cost-effective and time-saving to conduct a Skype interview due to the distance between Durham and other cities (Birmingham, Cardiff, Leicester), where the students were located. I did not encounter any problems in arranging for a Skype interview as all respondents interviewed with this mode already have it installed on their computers and are familiar with Skype as they have been using it to communicate with family and

friends back home. This made the arrangement for Skype interviewing easier. In total 20 Skype interviews were conducted. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. A number of respondents are given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

Another 12 face to face interviews were conducted with students residing in Durham and Newcastle and those who came to Durham and Newcastle to visit their friends. There is only 1 E-Mail interview conducted at the request of the respondent. Both Skype and face to face interviews were found to be very rewarding, although the Skype interviews were conducted without the video. One problem I encountered when conducting the Skype interview was the instability of internet connection that resulted in the conversations being disconnected or resulting in unclear replies from respondents. This disrupted the momentum of the interview. While some respondents were able to get back into the mood and the last conversations before the lines were disconnected, there were times with some others when the momentum of conversations was lost and the interview had to start all over again. Despite this problem, I found Skype interviews to be very rewarding, easy to arrange, not time consuming as it would be with an offline interview, as both researcher and respondent would have to travel to an arranged location. The issue of finding a quiet place to get clear replies and conversation is also solved by the use of Skype, which could be conducted at home, in one's bedroom.

Face to face interviews were conducted in a number of locations – study rooms in Durham University Main Library, Geography Department’s classrooms, Engineering Department’s study area, respondents’ homes and a cafe. I made sure that the locations of the Face to face interview were as quiet and accommodating as possible to ensure the recorded interview came out clear and with minimal disruption. However, the recorded interview that was conducted in a cafe (respondent’s request) had quite a lot of background noise. This problem was partially solved by the notes I took while having the conversation and the note-taking I did right after the interview when the respondent had left the venue.

For the interview I prepared 4 sets of questions that acted as interview questions and prompts that focused on respondents’ use of Facebook, their online and offline interactions, the meaning they attached to their Facebook interactions and their situation in Malaysia (see Appendix 3, Page 321-322). Despite having a clear breakdown of questions, I made sure the interviews followed a natural course. To break the ice between the interviewee and myself, I started by asking simple questions about their life and then went on to their Facebook usage: such as how long have they been using Facebook; how they feel about the site; the reasons for signing up to a Facebook profile; the types of activities they were involved with; the types of engagement (passive or active) they have online. I found that after asking these simple questions respondents were able to open up and started to talk, share their thoughts and experiences.

In earlier section above, I have written about being an insider, due to my Malay and Muslim identity and my proficiency in using Facebook as well as an outsider because I am not a Malay Malaysian. During the interviews, these insider/outsider positions are constantly emphasised. Respondents sometimes made it clear that I am an outsider, especially when the situation in Malaysia and Brunei differs, for instance in terms of the population breakdown, the socio-economic conditions and the benefits given by both governments to their citizens. At another time I became an insider when they wanted me to be on their side, to accept their actions and judgements with regards to (our) religious beliefs, the acceptance and rejection, the exclusion and inclusion of social others and their social actions. It seems that because of my Malay Muslim identity I should be able to understand their judgements. This push and pull of my insider and outsider position is apparent in this ethnographic research because of the detailed focus it has on trying to obtain the underlying reasons for actions and judgements. It provides very rich data to work with and provides nuances of experiences, influenced not only by their social relationships and experiences with others, but their replies are also shaped by our apparent identity/position. These nuances and rich findings are able to be drawn due to the methodology employed in this research, which quantitative methods cannot provide. Despite my effort to present a self that is neutral (as I have written in an earlier section), my identity (hence positioning within this study) is still influencing the flow and shape of the research. It could be speculated that if I were not a Malay Muslim (woman), the shape of this research would have been different. To reiterate, a researcher is never detached from his/her study. This knowledge of the identity of the researcher being carried over online when



conducting research recalls the idea of embodied/disembodied individuals online, studied previously (Sundén, 2003; Rybas and Gajjala, 2007).

#### **4.5.5 Method 2 – Online Observation**

The online observation method of data gathering in this main study was entirely observation, conducted on respondents with open Facebook profiles and those who have given me access to their Facebook as Friend and the groups created by students for students who are studying in the United Kingdom. I did not take note of the time spent online but I was logged in everyday checking Facebook from time to time, staying logged on observing for at least an hour each time. The persistence of data and the asynchronous feature it has, made observation outside the time respondents use their Facebook possible as these affordances allowed respondents updates to be accessed later. This is another affordance Facebook can provide when use as a research tool. Observation was conducted on 5 active groups I searched and found on Facebook: Durham University Malaysian Society (DUMAS); Durham My ++; CK + UG Cardiff; Malaysian Students' Society of Manchester (MSSM); and Malaysians Students Society of Glamorgan (MSSG) 2011/2012. I was interested to seek the students' experiences, the use of Facebook groups and its effect on their sense of self and belonging while away from home. The first 2 groups are not only for Malaysian students, they are open to students from other southeast Asian countries. As a student from Brunei, I was already a member of the 2 groups. I sent a request to join the other 3 groups for the purpose of observing the activities and interactions involved. I also used these groups to post recruitment

messages (I did not get any responses from this). My level of involvement in these groups was minimal. These groups were created for the purpose of bringing students together, keeping them posted with updates and to arrange for activities. These groups basically act as event coordinators; however the development and purposes of the groups evolved over time (depending on the members). Members of the groups increase every academic year with new students coming to study at these cities. Active members are always those students who are currently studying at the universities, while the previous members who have left the country became silent readers or have a very limited involvement.

Before commencing with the formal online observation, I created a list of points and questions I have on cosmopolitanism (as listed in section 4.3, Page 121) to take note when doing the observation whilst remaining vigilant of the actions that I might not have covered in the list. Who the members are, the topics they discussed or posted in the group, and the types of events they created were included in the list. These allowed me to see the types of activities that directly and indirectly affect Malaysian students in the United Kingdom. Through observation of these groups I was able to see the kinds of activities these students shared and the potential they have in strengthening their identity as Malaysian students, while overseas and regardless of their ethnicity. Although identity strengthening might not be one of the purposes for creating the groups, several of my respondents told me of their experience with some of the Facebook groups they are members of, and that they experienced reinforcement of their ascribed identities through communal activities

online and offline; an issue which I will discuss in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

Observation on the respondents' Facebook profiles was focused on their status updates, interactions and comments made on their page, the photos uploaded, the types of photo album they have, what they "Like", cover photos and profile photos. Cover photos are only for those profiles that were recently updated to the new Timeline format. Observation here is limited to their profile page because I could not monitor their interactions on their friends' pages. It would be a daunting task considering the limited time I had to complete the fieldwork, thus I limited the observation of their presentation of cosmopolitan self on their own profile and only visited other profiles when the topic of discussions or some matters are significant to this study, and therefore needed to be followed up. This vast pool of information to work with highlights the potential of the site as a research location/tool as well as highlighting the need to limit research according to the research questions and to factor in the time constraints. Similarly, if I were to employ social network analyses/quantitative analysis, the data gathering would provide a spread of information but would not allow for deeper analyses to be conducted as the data would be too huge and general to work with. There is always a limit to a research project's scope (Hine, 2009) and it should be defined by the research interests/questions themselves, partially in order to avoid doing unnecessary research activities.

The observations conducted were valuable in getting more than a glimpse of respondents' likes, dislikes, taste, and behaviour. Even though a user's personality could not be thoroughly read from their profile we could still have a glimpse of their life as Markham (2004: 147) has written "we give others a glimpse of the frames we use to view the world and reveal some of the masks we consciously or unconsciously think are important in the presentation of self". Online observation and interviews employed together provide this research with rich data as findings from both methods can be validated and critically assessed. As Kendall (1999: 62) endorses "(r)esearching understandings of participants' sense of self and of the meanings they give to their on-line participation requires spending time with participants to observe what they do on-line as well as what they say about what they do" and that "comparing participants' descriptions of their on-line behaviour with actual examples of that behaviour, enables researchers to critically evaluate statements by participants concerning the effects of their on-line participation" (1999: 71). As openness is never fixed and is contextualised, temporalised, spatialised and individualised, observation allows me to see the discrepancies in the information a respondent shared during their interview and to see other possible context in which his/her openness is expressed. I went back and forth recalling what have been said in interviews while observing their Facebook activities. Due to Facebook affordances (persistence and searchability), I was able to revisit what they did in the past and to take note of the traces or trail of activities they left on their profile. It is difficult to know the process they went through before posting such as self-censorship, self-negotiation, and dilemmas, thus data obtained from observation are supported by interview data. Referring back to their actions on

Facebook what was said during the interviews allowed for more understanding of the users' specific actions (comments, discussions). Coming back to the point made earlier about an overabundance of information, such data are limited to a researcher's ability to study them. The limitation of online observation is reduced by incorporating other research data.

#### **4.5.6 Findings, Coding and Analyses**

The analysis of the data started as early as the data collection stage. By doing so, it allowed me to understand the data recently gathered and to adjust later interview questions or prompts and the guidelines I had for the online observation. Only after the completion of the data collection stage (interview and observation) did the final data analysis commence. I gathered all the data from interviews and notes from the online observation to be re-read and re-analysed using the framework I set.

Data preparation and analyses were done using specific software – Express Scribe, NVivo, Snagit and also manually. Snagit was used to capture data online such as photos and pages. It allows for full window scrolling that captures data beyond those shown on the window. It was particularly useful in capturing Facebook pages and profile pages that have lengthy information that had to be scrolled down to be read<sup>50</sup>. This capability to scroll down Facebook profiles demonstrates the affordances written about the site in a previous chapter. An online site such as

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<sup>50</sup> It is a proprietary software from TechSmith which is easily accessible and available for online download or in CD-ROM.

Facebook, due to its data persistence, allows sharing previously made to be searched. These affordances the site offers were taken advantage of in this research. It allows earlier and current social interactions and sharing to be captured using a tool such as Snagit. Using these captured Facebook profiles and snippets of social interactions, observation and analyses of delayed and real-time interactions were conducted. Express Scribe was used to transcribe audio interviews, which were later integrated into NVivo for further coding and analysis. The use of software helped in organising the data into files and sections that are easily accessible and understood. There were however times when I felt too distant from my data, so that I resorted to manual analysis. Using coloured pens and paper helped to get me back to the data when the tedious work of doing the analysis on a computer removed the nearness and familiarity (Crang and Cook, 2007). By going back and forth between manual and software led analysis helped in clearing my thoughts and provided me with new ideas or angles to analyse the data.

I went through a number of coding stages using different strategies (Saldana, 2009). I started using the broad coding method to code the individual transcribed interviews. From a small number of free codes I managed to generate a large number of free codes that eventually made the coding too cumbersome. At this stage, I tried to get as many codes as possible that included: feelings, actions, attributes, influence and motives. From this I was able to generate a number of isolated code groups. Smaller nodes under each group were assessed individually and linked to nodes from other code groups to bring out their relationships. Breaking them apart and bringing them together helped to clarify the confusion and

the missing links between nodes and group codes. There were also times when I felt I had done the coding the wrong way and decided to start afresh. One of the advantages of NVivo is that all the codes generated earlier are saved even though new codes are created. This allowed me to go back and forth assessing the already created codes and the newly generated codes to see if there were any similarities or differences and if they should be put aside. There were a number of codes that were merged together because they represented the same thing. In this second coding stage, I moved my coding activity to the hard copy of interviews transcriptions, which I found to be very rewarding, especially after losing touch with the data on the computer. By removing myself from the computer and NVivo, transcribing the hard copy physically freshened my mind and helped to open up different angles to look at the data. Codes generated for the pilot interview also proved to be very valuable for coding the interviews from the main study. Although the earlier codes were not as comprehensive and detailed as those in the main study, having them close by while coding the later interviews made grouping codes and creating the names easier.

Coming back to the NVivo software, I conducted as much detailed coding as possible and went deeper to see variations in the earlier broad free codes I generated. Codes were moved around, deleted or created to better represent the data. Naming codes was a tedious task that required constant assessing and reassessing of the labels. Suitability of those codes attached to the data was one of my biggest concerns. Improper or irrelevant code names would affect my data analysis later, so that I had to think ahead of the coding stage to my data analysis

stage. To make sense of the data, I used the Model feature in NVivo that brought the codes together on one page. It allows the user to view all the codes created in the form of a mind map, with the flexibility of moving the codes around, changing the shapes, create relationships of code to another. With the model created, the codes and their relationships became clearer. I was able to see the emerging themes. The codes that were earlier in specific groups were moved around to more suitable groups. Other codes that were isolated, which might be valuable later, were left on the side.

This research is focused on online social interactions on Facebook, although it acknowledged online and offline interactions and experiences to be mutually constitutive, therefore the codes are arranged according to their online or offline activities. This allowed me to have a clearer picture of what is going on in offline and online spaces. Only by separating them in this way can I see the relationship between the two spaces.

Codes for online activities are grouped into a number of labels: Interactions Online; Managing Friendships; Family Relationship Online; Friends Relationship Online; Online Self; Positive Experience of Facebook; Negative Experience of Facebook; Openness due to Online Interactions; Tech Know How; Means of Communication; and Expectations on Facebook. Codes for offline activities are categorised into a number of groups: Descriptions of Malaysia; Background and Experience; Trust and Access; Inter-ethnic Relationships; Self-concept; Changing Personalities; Phase of Life; and Openness due to Overseas Travel.



These codes, even though they appear to be specific to offline or online environments, are inextricably linked to one another and often influence one another. For instance Phase of Life and Changing Personalities offline shape Online Interactions and Online Self. The relationships between them are mutually constitutive. They cover the respondents online and offline experiences and these experiences influence on the cultivation cosmopolitan sensibilities and performance of cosmopolitanism.

The first stage of analysis after coding focused on how Facebook is used in the respondent's everyday life, the significance of the site, and their experiences with their own context. During the interview I received a lot of answers on how Facebook was used daily and from there it was apparent that the experiences and reflexivity process they went through while they were using Facebook (not necessarily everyday) as a continuum are complex, not always straight-forward but laden with dilemmas, thoughts, contradictions, inclusion and exclusion, ignorance and acceptance, and negotiation. They are to some extent confined within their own Malay Muslim contexts online, that resulted in their strategic performance of self. Their actual use of the site and what they do online are relevant to this cosmopolitanism study, to such an extent that they shape cosmopolitan consciousness and its performance. This is followed by the second stage of analysis that examined the coded data using the proposed framework outlined in chapter three: analytical tools for cosmopolitan sensibilities and cosmopolitan performance. From the different stages of data analyses, I have a number of interconnected

themes (see below) which are discussed throughout the empirical chapters of this thesis (Chapter 5 – 7) in relation to online social interactions and cosmopolitanism.

- staying true to self;
- Facebook as extension of self;
- negotiating everyday life away from home;
- social structures and socio-cultural and religious contexts brought online;
- practising and strengthening core values and beliefs online;
- family relationships managed in different ways;
- the loose concept of friendship and interactions with others occurring differently than offline;
- strategically accepting others and strategic performance of open (not necessarily cosmopolitan) self.

The empirical chapters of this thesis are organised in this way: chapter five deals with the respondents' experiences on Facebook, using the site while they are away from home (Malaysia). This chapter discusses the complexities of the respondents' Facebook experiences by looking into their self-presentation and social relationships online, without any reference to cosmopolitanism at this stage. Their experiences of going online and being online set the background context of their online presence. Chapters Six and Seven address the core of this research; that is cosmopolitan sensibilities and cosmopolitan performance respectively. Chapter six engages with the re-thinking of cosmopolitanism using this term Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism labelled for their experience to explore and bring to the front

matters significant to (their) cosmopolitanism. This chapter draws out facets that are significant to this Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism, particularly the constant battle individuals experienced within their self, which eventually led to strategic deployment of religious discursive resources to navigate everyday online and offline life away from home. Chapter seven, building from the discussion left off in chapter six further deals with performance of those cosmopolitan sensibilities. It continues with the argument of cosmopolitanism as a strategy and demonstrated using empirical evidence how openness is performed as part of one's strategy. It discusses a common view of any forms of rooted/ Islamic cosmopolitanism that is in marked contrast to liberal Western cosmopolitanism. Using performance of religiosity (hijab and intimacies on Facebook) this chapter argues that performance of religiosity is not the anti-thesis of any cosmopolitanism.

To end this section, there is also an important point, which I am compelled to highlight here. Their cosmopolitan experiences that I studied through interview and observation, are limited to a specific time-frame and the available settings and features during the time of field work. Interviews allowed users' experiences to be elicited but what they shared are of the past based on what they remembered they did. Re-thinking about this, in the context of the fallibility of memory, what they shared might not be the actual cosmopolitanism felt and performed at that time and they could also be refraining from saying certain topics during the interviews (Busher and James, 2006). Based on my experience interviewing others and myself as an interviewee, what was said during interviews was not always straight-forward but shaped by the dynamic of the interview and the researcher/respondent

relationships as “all knowledge is produced in specific circumstances and that those circumstances shape it in some way” (Rose 1997: 305). Interviewees could refer to certain contexts at that time and provide examples suitable to express that when answering an interviewer’s questions. For example, when considering how one extends openness to cultural others, Kitzinger (2004: 128 cited in Silverman 2011: 181) has written “what (are said) should not be taken as evidence of their experience, but only as a form of talk – a ‘discourse’, ‘account’ or ‘repertoire’ – which represents a culturally available way of packaging experience”. At other times it could be a different (un-cosmopolitan) experience within the same context. Therefore contradictions are not always obvious and clear cut. They might only be palpable to the interviewee because those dilemmas, thoughts, and contradictions are in their mind. This, however, should not be seen only as limitations of this cosmopolitan research but as part of the complexities and challenges involved in doing fieldwork and social research. This research does not aim to provide a general statement summing up Malay Malaysian students’ (in the UK or in Malaysia) cosmopolitan experiences but to provide academia, particularly those relating to cosmopolitanism discourse, with new angles to study cosmopolitanism and to recognise that actual cosmopolitanism might be difficult to detect; in particular, that sometimes what is said by respondents could be a product of the past not the current experiences. Acknowledging this matter could provide this researcher (and scholars of cosmopolitanism studies) with some ideas to work with, especially in capturing real-time cosmopolitan performance when and where possible.

## 4.6 Summary

This study is designed in a way that allows the Malay students' individual experiences, contexts, and temporal aspects of their cosmopolitanism to be studied. The first three chapters of this thesis have emphasised the importance of studying cosmopolitanism that is practical, grounded in everyday experiences and that the definition and understanding of the term need not be drawn from abstract openness, flexibility, and tolerance, but rather located within individual mundane quotidian experiences. This chapter has presented and justified the ethnographic approach selected to study these students' cosmopolitanism. The selection of the ethnographic research approach to study openness on Facebook was based on a number of reasons. One, the emphasis this thesis placed on getting the voice of the respondents to share experiences and performance of openness that are expressed by themselves not constructed by a researcher's generalisations and macro-scale observation of their socio-cultural conditions. The ethnographic approach allows these experiences and the meanings behind the users' actions and decisions, in relation to their Facebook interactions and cosmopolitanism, to be elicited. Only through meanings attached to their actions and decisions can the cosmopolitanism of an individual be grounded and understood. Second, ethnography's suitability for studying everyday experiences offline and online has been demonstrated in earlier online research. This chapter went on to provide a detailed account of the pilot and main fieldwork, particularly the methods employed in semi-structured interviews and online observation. These research methods and issues included: challenges in recruiting respondents, the data analyses and researcher's own subjectivities,

identity, the sets of assumptions brought into the study, technical proficiency based on long-term engagement with online sites that proved to be an advantage as well as a challenge.

The researcher's dilemmas were also discussed. Conducting research online brings with it specific challenges and difficult ethical issues which are particular to the site, the subject studied, researcher's identity and subjectivities and the respondent's identity. Dilemmas such as presentation of self to potential respondents, disclosure and censorship of information were touched on in this chapter. Ethical issues such as friending friends on Facebook for research and doing covert observation while holding this Friend status were highlighted. The decisions made to deal with these dilemmas and issues took into account the situation, the respondents and the study. The research journey has not been linear, detached and emotionless but a journey both enjoyable and at times stressful. My research has been a learning experience not only for academic purposes but for myself as a Malay Muslim, an international student in the United Kingdom, a Facebook user and possibly a rooted Malay Muslim cosmopolitan. As Reinharz (1997 cited in Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011: 124) aptly writes "we not only "bring the self to the field...[we also] create the self in the field". The next three chapters present the empirical findings of this research, findings gathered from that same 'field'.

# Chapter Five

## Experiencing and Negotiating Everyday Life on Facebook

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### 5.1. Introduction

What Facebook is used for and users' appropriation of the site in their everyday lives, and how every day is experienced on the site, varies despite the same features, settings and affordances made available to anyone signing up for a profile. Recognising these variations, this thesis argues for the importance of researching these students' everyday use of Facebook by analysing the motivations and reasons behind their actions online, and to find out how it becomes part of their everyday life. The three preceding chapters have reiterated the importance of studying the everyday lives of the students, how Facebook is now part and parcel of youth's life, albeit with varying degrees of significance to them, and have also suggested studying what their everyday lives online mean to them and the contexts of their individual experiences. As Hine (2000: 8) reminds her readers, the 'study of everyday should pay detailed attention to the understandings which users have of what the internet is for' implying the importance placed on the user's (initial and eventual) motivations and purposes for using the Internet (Facebook), and what everyday activities mean online must be understood in their individual context. This chapter thus sets out to shed light on the students' individualised use of Facebook and their online experiences. It provides their varied quotidian experiences and discusses a number of significant matters with regards to their online presence.

Going online in their experiences speaks more than just about communicating with others, which social network sites such as Facebook offer, but it involves them significantly negotiating their everyday offline life that is seamlessly brought online. Their online behaviour is effectively shaped by their beliefs, culture, and the core values they developed over time, within their own socio-cultural and religious contexts.

Being away from home for a period of 1 to 4 years, as well as living in another country, brings different sets of experiences compared to when they are at home. However, because of their online presence they experience both home (Malaysia) and away (the UK) contexts online. Facebook, that is used initially as a tool for communicating with families and friends back home and those in the UK, over time becomes more than just a medium of communication akin to Skype, Yahoo Messenger (YM) and Short Messaging Services (SMS). Their Facebook use become more complex due to the features, settings and affordances the site has. Going online becomes more of a negotiation of absence and presence, public and private, control and freedom and home and away. Being physically away from home but present online saw the students constantly renegotiating their self and relationships that are anchored in both the host and home contexts.

It is already a decade since the creation of Facebook and the academic interest in this particular social network site has grown in size. The topics of interest include patterns of usage, motivations for self-disclosure and self-censorship, issue of privacy, blurring of private and public, the potential of the site for business and



marketing, potential for education, as a platform for exploring and presenting self and identity, social capital building and maintenance of relationships coming from different (sub)disciplines such as psychology, sociology, computing, education and business. Readers following the Facebook (and social network sites in general) discourse would have known what the site has been used for to date; the evolution in its use that has gone beyond its initial purpose – networking, the potentials and the problems it brought to users' self and relationships. These latter two aspects of their everyday lives that are (re)shaped by the emergence of new forms of sociabilities are discussed in this chapter. First, the dynamics of their presentation of self that Facebook's affordances help create; second, the dynamics of their social relationships, particularly on the notion of online parenting. Using the interview excerpts of a number of respondents, this chapter hopes to bring to the front their specific contexts and experiences to highlight the nuances in the users' everyday experiences on Facebook and also the strategies they employ to navigate the complexities of the site's infrastructure and affordances.

## **5.2. Going Online, Being Online – Setting the Scene**

Malaysian youth, as discussed in chapter two, are now considered informed and wired and there has been an exponential increase in the number of Internet users, specifically youth, in the country. The percentage of youth not using Internet in Malaysia dropped from 67% in 2007 to only 2% in 2012, which is reflected by the growth in Internet use for information gathering, communicating and social networking (see Appendix 6, Page 330). The number of users of Facebook also

increased, since it was made available to the general public in 2006. Many of the students interviewed have used Facebook from as early as 2007<sup>51</sup> and the majority continue to use the site on an everyday basis, while a number use the site less frequently over time for many reasons. The site is effectively used as a medium of communication with people who are physically near and far. Despite the site's general features, affordances and settings that are more or less consistent and are widely available, the use of the site is heterogeneous and, for a supposedly neutral site, it is laden with emotions, values, and beliefs brought by users who are confined within certain sets of beliefs, values and customs. Facebook is used as a tool for information seeking, a tool for maintaining relationships with those at the place where they study, other places and those at home who are physically unreachable. It also unintentionally and sometimes subconsciously offers a platform for one's self presentation. Their use of the site, at least to many respondents, speaks of not just basic Facebook use and profile management, but also how they experienced and negotiated everyday life while away from home. This is one of the major recurring themes in this research. Users' absence from home and online presence created new dynamics in their relationships and self. New forms of online sociabilities have extended and reshaped the definition and experience of friendship, family intimacies, and self-presentation and produced varieties of complications in relation to their self and relationships. Prior to discussing these dynamics and complications, I will first draw readers' attention to what users do on Facebook and how they use the site to show nuances of their

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<sup>51</sup> A year after the site was made available to general users. Facebook was first made available to Harvard University students and later to other universities in the United States. It was opened to the general public in 2006.

online experiences; this will also set the scene for later discussions, including those in chapters six and seven on cultivation of cosmopolitan consciousness and performances of cosmopolitanism on the site.

### **5.2.1. Facebook Use and Engagement**

How frequently users check their Facebook, update their status, send messages, leave comments, and how long they spend on the site are important to studies focusing on Facebook use and matters pertaining to the use of the site and the motives for using the site. Knowledge of these allows the users' practices and behaviour to be analysed as shown by previous studies (E.g in Tosun, 2012; Strano, 2012). In all the interviews I conducted, I asked the respondents how often they log in to check their profile and news feed from their desktop and Facebook Mobile app; how long they stay logged on and what they do when they are on Facebook. The answers given vary. Checking Facebook can be as frequent as three to four times a day, once a day or once a week and staying logged on varies from a few minutes to an hour, the whole day or even never logging off. While many have said that their Facebook is just a medium of communication that they check when they need to, many admitted that it has become part of their daily ritual, thus compelling them to check their Facebook early in the morning, throughout the day and at the end of the day before going to sleep.

One respondent, Razali, whose Facebook friends exceed 2000 users (during the interview) uses the site primarily to keep in touch with family and friends in

Malaysia and those in the UK, as well as adding those he just met offline to maintain their (weak) ties. He admitted to be reliant on his Facebook and to checking Facebook as part of his daily ritual, although he cannot provide the reason(s) for his behaviour as the interview extract below shows. He also had a Facebook Mobile app installed on his iPhone which is always logged on facilitating access to himself and others anywhere and anytime, although he is not obligated to reply instantly.

*MM - so are you dependent on your Facebook mobile? Do you like check it regularly?*

*Razali - yeah regularly, I can say that yes.*

*MM - Do you wake up every morning and you just...*

*Razali - Yes it's like you know...I don't know why when I arrived here (in the UK) it's like Facebook is the only thing that can help me to wake up 100% so I can read everything and then when I read everything then I feel fresh then I can go to shower and then go to the class. I don't know why maybe there is power (smile). There is only unknown reason why.*

*MM – it's the first thing people check in the morning and the last thing people check when they go to sleep (laugh).*

*Razali - you know the answer already. I think yes that is true. Not only me. I think most people.*

Checking Facebook regularly or infrequently does not indicate their level of engagements on the site. Although many admitted to checking their profile and their news feed three to four times a day, they did not share anything on the site or 'comment/like' their friends' updates during those times. Abir, one of the earliest users of Facebook among the respondents, who still considers her own long-term engagement to be active, talked about being on Facebook but not necessarily

commenting on her friends' updates or sharing anything and sometimes only checking the site when she has incoming notifications on her Facebook Mobile App. Labelling a user as 'active' or 'less active' is not a straightforward matter as this depends on their own thoughts of their online activities. For one person, active use could mean regular postings and commenting but for another it could be just checking the news feed and spending time on the site lurking. How one considers their use is also very personal. Abir considers checking updates without posting anything on the site as active use of the site but in another time and situation her online presence and active posting is also considered as active. This kind of varied definition of online engagements is also reflected in the responses given during the interviews when I asked the respondents about their level of engagement and whether they consider theirs as passive (my prior understanding as lurking, checking news feed, profile hopping) or active (my prior understanding as sending messages, commenting, liking, status updates). There was no straightforward answer and many have said "moderate" rather than active or passive, and what some consider as moderate use is what others consider as active. Due to the nuances in their individualised use of Facebook they could not provide definitive answers. The respondents' understanding of these different levels of engagement varies according to what they understood these terms to imply and their experiences online. My prior assumptions (based on my own use of the site) of what active and passive refers to are not supported. Rather than have a definite label of active or inactive user, it is more practical to see their activities as having temporal and contextual aspects. Online activities are also influenced by other aspects of life, such as phase of life (stress, emotional turmoil, relationship

problems, examinations, academic workload), critical incidents (bad experiences involving other users, death in the family), and self-reflexivity (learning from others' use of Facebook, own experiences). These play a part in users' judgements concerning their level of engagements and frequency of use.

A phase of life influence, such as academic workload/examinations put a temporary halt to their Facebook activities. Another male respondent, Mohamad, uses Facebook frequently to keep in touch with friends, to keep his friends updated with events in his life, being online and letting his friends know his presence is important for him. However, there were times when he had to be absent from Facebook, Twitter and Foursquare due to exams. Critical incidents, such as a death in the family made one respondent, Hafizah, realise that Facebook could not provide her with the emotional support she needed; face-to-face interactions are more rewarding, especially during sad times. Reflecting on her experience when she lost her father, she said

*"the physical support really matters as compared to Facebook kind of support because when I lost my dad when I was in my second year doing PhD I find that those people are sending me cards, sending me books and the things that I like even though from far. One of my ex housemates, she is from Brunei, she knows that I like this particular keropok [crisp] and then she sent a few of them. It's quite expensive actually. She said that I still remember when there is one particular (time) when she was having a problem with the boyfriend who is now the husband so we were eating keropok it's really those moments (that) are really meaningful for her and then she said that even though I cannot do that with you I hope that keropok will soothe you. Remind you that I'm there for you even though not physically,*

*keropok tu kind of representative lah so as compared to like saying condolences”.*

She lost her father when she was in the second year of her PhD and it was not possible to come back home at that time due to academic commitments. The emotional support she received came in the form of material goods sent by post and online (written) condolences on Facebook. According to her, the material support she received, even via something as small as crisps, provided her with much-needed emotional support compared to online exchanges (condolences). Due to such a realisation (also other bad experiences on Facebook), her use of the site is more instrumental than expressive<sup>52</sup>, sharing basic information that does not require heavy emotional investment and commitment by her Facebook friends. Contrary to another PhD student’s experience, Amal also finds it difficult to return home when she wanted to, due to her PhD workload; however, in her case she was able to find sufficient emotional support that she sometimes needed. Being physically distanced from her family means that she cannot get physical and immediate emotional support during stressful times and communicating via telephone is not convenient for her due to the 7 to 8 hour time difference between Malaysia and the UK, as well as to the high cost of international calls<sup>53</sup>. Facebook (among other medium of communication) became an important emotional support enabler during these times. As she said *‘it is one of those days you need your (Facebook) category – family, extended family to help you out’*. Knowing she could get emotional support online, she was not afraid to use the site’s features (Inbox

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<sup>52</sup> The terms Instrumental and Expressive are also used by Tufecki (2008) and Miller and Arnold (2003) to differentiate between different types of Social Networking Sites and Internet use respectively.

<sup>53</sup> The time difference depends on the start and the end of the British Summer Time (BST).

and Chat) to get feedback. These experiences highlight respondents' use of the site and demonstrate how events in life shape their use temporarily or in the long run. Coming back to the examples provided above, for Mohamad the exam period put a halt to his frequent use of the site, while for Hafizah, the failure of the site to provide much needed emotional support she was missing, during a sad time, influenced her future use of the site, that has become more instrumental than before. Amal's positive experiences led her to believe that the site could provide her with what she needs, especially when she is away from her family members: hence she is more motivated to use the site to obtain emotional support. What these examples show is that the varied use of the site is shaped by the respondents' individual experiences.

### **5.2.2. Users' Expectations – The Proper Way of Using Facebook**

Apart from those kinds of experiences, their initial reasons for having Facebook seemed to influence how they use the site. Mohamad's use of Facebook comes back to what he thinks Facebook is for and its importance in his life. The interview extract below explains his four main reasons for having Facebook:

*“Well number 1 I think it's just a trend I mean it sounds absurd nowadays if you go around meeting new people and asking for their business card. Nowadays people ask your Facebook, that's what people normally do now. It's just seems weird without Facebook. I actually got a friend only one friend who doesn't have Facebook. From that I can see he is missing a lot of things because from Facebook you can keep in touch with your friends, your old colleagues even find your old colleagues. I mean I used to have a best friend from umm, I used to stay in Kemaman,*



*Kuala Terengganu...I used to have a best friend there and I moved to KL we lost contact and everything but we found each other back from Facebook and then probably reason number 2 is for events. Nowadays people don't use cards anymore, British even...birthdays whatever. Number 3, birthdays probably. I can't remember everyone's birthday so Facebook has helped me a lot remembering birthdays and anything else probably keeping myself up to date to my friends I mean I myself would want to know what my friends are up to and I'm pretty sure they want to know about me as well. Instead of having them asking me directly why don't you just go to my Facebook? Facebook is an extension of myself in that sense".*

Their initial reasons for having Facebook (peer pressure, keeping up with the trend of having a profile on a social network site, the increased chances for online reunion, creating an events' page for offline events, and maintaining family and friends ties) evolved over time to include shopping on Facebook, finding Malaysians who are currently living in the city they are going to for their undergraduate or postgraduate degree, photo sharing and for academic discussions (by using Facebook Group). Mohamad's use of the site demonstrates that despite being created for social networking, users can make use of the features the site offers for more than just communicating and keeping up with the trend. It is also used as a reminder for events. A birthday reminder, for instance, is significant for the maintenance of relationships, however simple it may appear. Facebook not only has become a tool to communicate with others, it has also become an extension of self for Mohamad and many other respondents. It is not easy to categorise the use of Facebook as a tool, an extension of self or as a place where users gather to discuss about a topic. The empirical findings from the interviews that have been

shared so far, illuminate the complexities in seeing Facebook simply as a tool, or an extension of self or a place, because for some users Facebook is all these. Markham (1998), in her ethnographic study of online experiences, found that online sites such as MUDs are tools for the users, a place to gather and a way of being. She admits that creating a continuum of these 'does not begin to capture the nuances of how people understand their experience online' however having such a continuum provides the foundation to further see the diversity of people's online experiences (1998: 114). Following her, rather than provide different categories of Facebook uses that would not be able to represent the diversity of my respondents' use and experiences online, it is more useful to observe the intricate link of different Facebook use, according to the contexts and experiences as demonstrated, using the respondents' experiences and to be open to any possibilities of what the site is to its users.

What I wish to flag, using Mohamad's statement that Facebook for him is also an extension of himself, is an interesting aspect of self and online technology. The use of social network sites and any other sites such as Flickr, Instagram and the earlier CMCs – MUDs for self-exploration and expression by users is not uncommon. Mohamad's experience with Facebook highlights an interesting question with regards to his self-organisation. Do the site's structures and features mould the users' self or does the user shape the site? Similarly, does a user use Facebook to organise him or herself or does a user use Facebook according to his/her way of organising self offline? These questions are pertinent to ask, considering the differences between offline and online contexts which should result in different

ways of interacting with social others and organising information through specific self-disclosure and self-censorship. For Mohamad, he appropriates his self according to the contexts, infrastructures and features of the site but also, at the same time, shaping the site by his beliefs and offline self, although he strongly believes that Facebook does not shape him – *“I don’t think Facebook shapes me. I shape my own Facebook...(it) is just a software, a programme. I mean it should have nothing against you. You are the one who should control your Facebook”*. Many other respondents share a similar view to Mohamad’s. In this sense, Facebook lives and offline lives are organised simultaneously and complement each other, a point which I will further observe and discuss in the remaining empirical chapters of this thesis. Facebook, especially the infrastructural expectations users have of others’ use of the site, influenced the respondents’ activities (which will be discussed shortly).

Beside an individual’s own motivation to access the site and their online experiences described previously, together with infrastructural differences, create the perception that social networking sites are employed differently and they should be aligned with what the site offers and what it is initially defined as. One respondent, despite his heavy dependence on Facebook to keep in touch with others and to provide him with his daily information fix, sees the site as simply another mode of communication. He does not believe in oversharing of emotional and personal information. Activities for him must be restricted to what Facebook is for – networking (which is obvious from the way he uses the site as a way to keep in

touch with those he just met offline<sup>54</sup>) and status update feature must be used appropriately. When we were talking about status updates, I asked him if he writes status with his family in mind; according to him he normally does not dedicate his updates for his family. They are usually about him and reflect only himself. He went on to explain that before the current layout change Facebook status section was about “*What’s happening now?*” which he thinks has been changed to “*What do you like?*”<sup>55</sup> Despite the change he is still using the keyword *what’s happening now* for his status and using this interpretation to assess other users’ activities. I was taken aback by his remarks on how the Facebook status feature should be used. As an experienced and long-term Facebook user, I was never concerned with the prompts Facebook placed on the status update section. Status should just be whatever I want to share with my Friends. I found his remarks fascinating that such a rule (with people following it strictly) existed. What this suggests is that there are certain expectations of Facebook use from others’ that indirectly dictate how Facebook should be used and using that to judge, advise and reprimand others on any inappropriate use of the site. This infrastructural appropriateness is one of the recurring aspects of the expectations of Facebook use. Below is an extract of his interview that shows his expectation of users’ status updates. Having the same person’s updates on his news feed disrupts the feeds he should be getting from all other friends. His strategy to handle this excessive sharing is by removing that user from his friends list. What this action of removing those unwanted friends

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<sup>54</sup> He is one of the respondents that I formed a friendship with offline. Our offline gathering allowed me to observe his behaviour with new people he just met and his inclination to ask them for their Facebook name so that he could add them as one of his Facebook friends.

<sup>55</sup> He was right about the changed prompts on the Facebook status section. However it was not from “*What’s happening now?*” to “*What do you like?*” but from “*What are you doing right now?*” to “*What’s on your mind?*”.

highlights is the transformation in the meaning of Friendship. Facebook 'friends' becomes a friendship/relationship that is easily broken off due to the ability of the user to 'unfriend' anyone they believe to be a nuisance to them (Sibona and Walczak, 2011).

*MM - Do you have like expectations on what people should say or should not share on Facebook?*

*Razali - I have. Obviously people nowadays are really interested to share their feelings umm but for me feelings you can share but not too frequent in 1 day you put 100s status is like what the hell are you doing. You can put 100s of status on your Twitter nobody cares because your...it won't affect other people but on your Facebook it will appear on people wall you know it's like news and feeds so for me to put something on Facebook yeah you can share everything that you want your love or your dissatisfaction but don't put it too much. Limit your status at least 5 per day or 10. Doesn't matter how much but not too frequent meaning now 10 minutes 1 status. Can you imagine 24 hours it's like 240!*

*MM – but what I thought is when you go to Twitter they have this notification every time there is a tweet...*

*Razali - yeah but it's not affect(ing) other people because if you follow that person let say if you follow that person it just appear and then it will suddenly... it will remove remove remove. For me every day, I have when I open my home button it's about 200 news but doesn't matter because I Follow them so I can read whatever I want but I don't read it, I just read something important but on Facebook your Friend, your Friend. For me it's not necessary because you also want to read other people status but how come when you open it all of it is your friend, the same person for 100 status is it you know annoying!*

*MM - Don't you think it's because of the layout of the Facebook? It's the way Facebook and Twitter differ in terms of the settings or you keep on seeing you know when people tweet you can see the timeline but if you go to Facebook It's the person who updated their Facebook the most. That would be the first thing that you see on the news feed right?*

*Razali - yeah*

*MM - Maybe it's because of the settings of the Facebook. That's why...*

*Razali - It might be a reason but I still I think if you want to write something more (than) 100 things 100 status per day you can use Twitter. I don't know but this is the thing I agreed with several of my friends. Few of my friends said yes because in Twitter you won't disturb people because you only can see...people say your followers or the one that you Follow their status or maybe the thing they uploaded but in Facebook it's like everything you check in, your location, your photos, your relationship. Everything is there so for me it's annoying. You can just remove that person from your (Facebook), you can, I used to do it. Because some few people always mentioning about love and keep repeating the same thing I think is annoying but my opinion yeah you can share everything it's up to you because it's your Facebook but for me if you want to keep updating your status please use Twitter because Twitter is more convenient for you to write more and more and more because it's like your own diary but Facebook is like your... it's not like a diary because you can't share everything on your Facebook. Twitter you can share everything because Twitter is for Followers and friends. Follower is someone that you think can I don't know but for me is different, Followers and Friends. Friend is your friend but Followers is like they decided to follow you so you have right to say whatever you want.*

Many expect to be removed from the Friends' network when their online behaviour becomes unbearable for their friends and some do not seem to mind being unfriended on Facebook. As another respondent said *"if you don't want to see my update just unfriend me or just hide me but it's funny how they still follow me...just unfollow me lah, you know just hide me off your news feed or something yeah but they never did. I don't care. It's my profile, it's my account and if you don't like me just don't follow me"*. It seems that users expect one another to adhere to specific

sets of Facebook etiquette such as not oversharing, limiting the number of status updates and they are aware of the risk of being removed from one's friends' network when they do not conform to these etiquettes<sup>56</sup>.

These emergent sociabilities and the site's affordances have transformed the definition of friendship as Donath (2007: 246) notes "(a)s SNSs expand, they may transform the concepts of friendship, (and) personal acquaintance". Online friendship (in Social Network Sites) has received a considerable interest by scholars focusing on the potential of online friendship such as the expanding online friends (weak or strong ties) for social capital building (Ellison et al., 2006; boyd and Ellison, 2007; Donath, 2007; Ellison et al., 2011) but the loose definition of this category of online friendship remained less observed and explored. Commitment to others is seemingly easy to retract indicating a low commitment to maintain certain online relationships. When relationships get too complex or the other parties become 'annoying' – when their activities do not conform to the expected netiquette (including socio-cultural and religious expectations) relationships are easily terminated by clicking the 'Unfriend' button. Unfriending becomes some sort of a strategy to relinquish weak friendships as illustrated by the two experiences shared above (Young, 2013). Those who did this did not seem to be concerned with the after-effect of their actions, particularly the potential discomfort this unfriending would bring to both parties. Many share this 'if you don't like me you can

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<sup>56</sup> There are a number of Facebook etiquette published online as online articles for instance 'Essential Facebook Etiquette' by Michael Poh (Source: POH, M. *Essential Facebook Etiquette: 10 Dos and Don'ts* [Online]. Hongkiat.com Design. Inspiration. Technology. Available: <http://www.hongkiat.com/blog/facebook-etiquette/> [Accessed 19 October 2012]).

hide/remove/unfriend me' attitude. The site's affordances itself are being appropriated to suit the needs. This loose friendship is also characterised by the potential of friending strangers online, in line with the purpose of Facebook, which is networking. However, the experiences of the students did not indicate major tendencies in friending strangers (Ellison et al., 2011), which will be discussed in chapter six in relation to cultivation of cosmopolitan sensibilities. All students interviewed claimed that their Facebook Friends are those they have already known for a long time offline or those they just have befriended offline (course mates, people they met at conferences, workshops etc.) and recently added as a Facebook Friend. Facebook is not used primarily for finding new friends or browsing strangers' Facebook profiles but for maintaining existing offline relationships (Lampe et al., 2006; Ellison et al., 2007). Large numbers of their Facebook friends are made up of those they know from offline. One respondent, Farid, admitted that he moved from Friendster to Facebook because of the incessant friends requests from other Friendster users. Facebook for him is less annoying in terms of strangers' friend requests. Only two respondents in this study used Facebook to connect with strangers (those they had never met offline) so they could talk to them. When I asked one of them her motivation for doing so she claimed that through friending strangers and communicating with them she could understand their environment and how they make friends with others. Although she claimed to be adding strangers these strangers are in fact Malays from Malaysia not users from other ethnicities and nationalities. For someone to claim she is interested in learning about other people her interactions with other people outside her race (such as Indian, Chinese and others) are minimal. The majority of the participants in



this study admitted to only minimal interactions with others outside their Malay Muslim group or outside their close-friends and family circle. The other respondent, who considers himself an open individual, does make friends beyond his own cultural group, and feels quite comfortable friending strangers online as he remarked: *"Strangers are friends you have not met. I kinda believe in that because there was this once when I came back to Malaysia last Hari Raya. It was 24 hours before I was leaving back to the UK. So I made these 10 things I need to do in 24 hours. So number 10 is meet a stranger. So I actually pick up someone over Twitter and say "Hey are you around? Let's go have cendol (Asian-Malay delicacy)?"*" Their experiences, in terms of building new relationships with people they have never met, are in clear contrast to the other respondents' experiences on Facebook.

Expectation of how other users employ their Facebook varies. For instance, Mohamad in contrast to Razali, who has certain expectations of how others should use their Facebook, does not mind how, and what for, his friends use their Facebook, because for him it is their personal space.

*MM - when you say you wanted to you know be up to date so your friends would know what you are doing and what they are doing, do you have a kind of information you would expect to see in Facebook. Sometimes you have like "ok this person he or she is sharing too much info on certain things" so people get annoyed. Do you have that kind of...*

*Mohamad - umm (pause) that's a good point I don't hold anything against that in a sense that (pause) I've seen this complain made by people especially on Twitter it's like umm this guy is updating his Facebook status every 5 minutes for me there is nothing wrong with that some people complaining why don't you use Twitter instead. So to me (there is) nothing wrong with*

*that. It's your personal page if you don't like it why are we friends in Facebook so that's my opinion.*

*MM - do you get people sending you inboxes telling you "you share too much information"?*

*Mohamad - aaaa no because so far I don't think I shared too much. It's just a case like once a day I try to make sure I put something on Facebook so that I can (tell) people that I'm still alive...yeah...but I don't update my status every 5 minutes or something...*

*MM - ohh alright so it's um at least once a day lah...*

*Mohamad - it's like once a day, twice a day. Just simple things like quotes, what I'm doing right now yeah but usually I rely on Foursquare because I link my Foursquare to Facebook but I do 'check in' quite a lot but I don't link most of my check-ins to Facebook only like major places I would. umm I would share on Facebook.*

*MM - do you have a reason for that? Why you only share certain you know major places but not...*

*Mohamad - well for one I don't wanna overshare, I don't want to overshare. Sometimes I check in at the same place twice per day so that thing will appear twice on my Facebook so it its rather redundant so that's why I don't do that.*

Although Mohamad claimed to be unaffected by his friends' over sharing, he himself seems to be concerned with what others would think of his sharing. By not over sharing he maintains a generally acceptable use of Facebook. His last answer above gives the impression that he is learning from others' experiences, what is acceptable and what is not, is negotiated and performed accordingly. Self-reflection based on others' experiences shape his use of the site. This is a common experience for many of the respondents of this study. Self-reflection from their own and

others' experiences effectively shape their use of the site. This becomes part of online social grooming and learning of Facebook etiquette. How one organises oneself on the site depends on a number of factors such as own self-organisation, own understanding of what the site is for, and other users' expectations of its purpose. The experiences shared by the respondents above spell out the nuance of their use of the site and organisation of self on the site.

### **5.2.3. Self-Image Online**

Not only do the respondents' appear to have specific expectations on how to use Facebook features, interestingly the checking of Facebook regularly gives off negative feelings and impressions to these users themselves as well as others. It seems unhealthy to be checking Facebook all the time, making the user appear to their friends as a Facebook "*addict*"<sup>57</sup> (with nothing better to do). Because of this, users find themselves constantly monitoring the frequency of their access, especially how that frequency appears to their Facebook friends. Although they read their friends' status updates or have seen the photos uploaded, pretending not to be online is a strategy to manage their image as a moderate Facebook user. I illustrate this using the experience shared by my respondents.

Izzah, an undergraduate whose use of Facebook was previously, in her own words, "crazy", has now taken to using the site moderately. From checking Facebook every

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<sup>57</sup> The term respondents use to indicate other user who is always on Facebook posting materials, commenting on others' updates and seemingly has nothing else to do expect be on Facebook.

five minutes in a day, she now only checks her profile and news feed once every three days. For Izzah, being online frequently (unknown or known by others) is unnatural and not good for her image, which she only realised after using the site for quite some time. Another respondent, Abir, also found herself negotiating between being online and maintaining her studious image. For a student, a continuous active online presence gives the impression that he or she has not been studying or paying enough attention to academics, as a student should be doing. Therefore, for her, as a hardworking student and being known as one, she felt pressured to maintain her “studious” image. She said *“during my degree I did get that, a few comments, saying that I’m always on Facebook, that sort of like gave them the idea that I didn’t study. I hated you know people thinking I didn’t study at all. The fact is that it’s Swansea what can you expect. I’m bored (laugh)”*. Experience such as this shapes her online behaviour later. She knows that being seen less on Facebook would help maintain that ‘studious’ image she felt compelled to portray. What the respondents’ experiences show here is that the image they need to portray and maintain depends on their offline identity. Whether it is offline or online, many respondents felt that they have to reach the expectation other users have of them. Their offline identity for instance as an educator, a student, Malay, and a Muslim must be reflected on Facebook. The absence of any of these factors might affect their presentation of self and eventually how others regard them. This emphasises that online and offline identity and self-expressions are not detached. The presence of their offline network on Facebook allows their identity to be validated, creating what is called a “nonymous environment” (Zhao et al., 2008:

1818). How this online-offline identity validation shaped their experiences will be discussed shortly.

What has been presented in this *Going Online, Being Online* section illustrates the respondents' nuanced Facebook usage, that is shaped by both online and offline experiences. On the surface their use of the site appears similar to other users: communicating with those far and near, a place to meet others and discuss matters, or even an extension of self but by going online and being online they portray diverse online behaviours that are very individual, context dependent, shaped by their initial motivation to use the site, their life experiences (phase of life or critical incident or self-reflexivity), expectations of other users and the site's infrastructures. These infrastructures, features and affordances in a way shape how the respondents organise themselves online (through self-disclosure and self-censorship) but their own self is also shaping how the site is used. Within their own personal use they are still bound by socio-cultural and infrastructural expectations of other users, as the later sections on self and social relationships will discuss.

### **5.3. Exploring and Presenting Self on Facebook**

As shown in previous studies, social networking sites are known to have been appropriated as a platform for users to explore self, present different aspects of their self to an intended audience or audiences and those who might have access to their profile, although not being the primary audience. With these conscious or subconscious presentations of self there is an impression management process

involved, in which the users are believed to be acting in their best to present 'selves' that are acceptable and positive through direct impression (given) and indirect impression (given off). Their performance is always within the context of the social interactions with other social actors; the intended and unintended audiences (Goffman, 1959). Studies conducted by other scholars (e.g Miller and Arnold, 2003; Hewitt and Forte, 2006; Zhao et al., 2008; Mehdizadeh, 2010; Tosun, 2012; Chen and Marcus, 2012) have shown that online sites such as Facebook are effectively used to present self and, even if presentation of self is not the main reason for having a Facebook profile, users are drawn into these performances of self. The findings of this ethnographic study of Malay Malaysian youth's online experiences have shown that the use of Facebook, at least to many, is not simply about having a profile and an instrumental mode, such as sharing basic information and a medium to communicate with others, like a mobile phone, Skype and Yahoo Messenger are to them, but uses and online presence that are loaded with challenges, complexities, and negotiations as have been demonstrated, based on the experiences of a number of respondents in the previous section. Their online presence is circumscribed within multiple contexts and the site's affordances are shifting how self is experienced, created, organised and expressed. The presence of immediate family members, distant relatives, friends, colleagues, as well as acquaintances in the same space creating a collapsed context that shapes users' behaviour, interactions and expressions questions the emancipatory power of new media in terms of identity expressions and its potential to encumber the possibility of full freedom. There is a reasonable limit to the emancipation and freedom to be expected from new social media. In earlier online studies (particularly

postmodernist approaches such as in Sherry Turkle's work), online sites have been demonstrated to allow users to create new self, present different facets of self that might vary from their self offline. Sites such as Multi User Dungeons (MUDs), Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and bulletin boards allow anyone to explore, even gender-bending. There have been a growing number of studies, for instance since the postmodernist approach to online self, that show users are not entirely boundless and disembodied entities; allowed to make up new identities, detaching their gender, race, and religion but to some extent found themselves carrying their ascribed offline identities. Breaking free from socio-cultural and religious influences is not automatic. The online presence of those categories mentioned above, as well as users' own identities, subjectivities and experiences create contexts that are more or less similar to the offline contexts (Robinson, 2007). Users would be under the surveillance of family, friends, and others who would expect certain behaviour and standards from other users. Expressing oneself could become problematic. Markus and Kitayama (1991: 235) emphasise that "the public display of one's own internal attributes can be at odds with the maintenance of interdependent, cooperative social interaction, and when unchecked can result in interpersonal confrontation, conflict, and possibly even overt aggression". Maintenance of coherent selves is vital to an individual as failure to do so will damage that person (Davis, 2011).

### 5.3.1. Home Context Recreated

Such collapsed contexts therefore creates a condition in which these respondents online presence is always a negotiation of being *at home* and away from home, managing control and freedom, managing what is public and private, and managing absence and presence online. Within that collapsed context, their dominant Malay Muslim (to some extent Malaysian) context is brought online by the presence of their ethnically dominated Facebook network. Having families, friends, and colleagues from Malaysia as Facebook Friends also creates a number of different contexts – family intimacies contexts, friendships contexts, work relationships contexts and fascinatingly creating contexts that resemble those at home - Malaysia (Robinson, 2007). In the previous section, we know that users have certain expectations of their friends use of the site; for instance one of the respondents who uses the site for networking, especially, expects his friends to conform to the infrastructural setting of the site that is for networking not for oversharing (emotional) everyday details. However, another respondent found it imperative to manage her online presence to create the impression that she is still the hard working student everyone thinks she is. What was not mentioned in that section was the cultural and religious expectations fellow Malay Muslim Malaysians family and friends have of the research participants. Being a Malay Muslim compels them to present an online self that is coherent with this offline self and the expectations these audiences have of the users are similar to those they have of them back home, even though their presence are now *online*. This situation is similar to the findings from other studies that saw offline contexts brought online (Miller and



Slater, 2000; Robinson, 2007) but what differentiates these students from others are their socio-cultural and religious contexts. It is within this dominant Malay Muslim context that they negotiate their everyday lives online and offline.

In Miller and Slater's (2000) ethnographic study of the Trinidadians users online use, they found that Trinidadians are "seemingly continuously aware of themselves as Trini in terms of thinking through the difference and identity in everyday discussion" (p. 86), contrary to the experience of my respondents who see themselves primarily as Malay Muslim rather than merely Malaysian<sup>58</sup>. If the concept of national context is less apparent among my respondents, that may be due to their heterogeneous society. Malaysian includes Malay, Chinese, Indian and indigenous people and each of these ethnic groups has their own culture and religious beliefs. The respondents are aware of their Malaysian nationality but identify themselves first and foremost as a Muslim, then as Malay; characteristics which are expressed online. As explained in chapter two, all Malays in Malaysia are constitutionally defined as Muslim. Being born as a Malay Muslim and practicing Islam all their life, they strongly identify themselves as Muslim; hence the self they portray online, whether it is intentional or not, reflects this dominant socio-cultural and religious identity rather than a national identity like the Trinidadians. In a Malay (Muslim) society, Islam becomes the basis of all actions and behaviour, relationships, key values, opinions and attitudes (Zainal Kling, 1980 cited in Noriati, 2005: 233), thus an individual is always assessed according to these cultural and

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<sup>58</sup> I asked my respondents what being a Malaysian means to them. It was a difficult question for many. They were not sure what being Malaysian means apart from being born in Malaysia, living in Malaysia and speaking Malay Malaysian language.

religious conventions, which are brought onto Facebook when they carry the user's embodied self on the site.

What this dominant Malay Muslim context result to is the expressions of everyday Malay Muslim self that are not just assessed everyday by other users but are monitored over the long run. There are no obvious hard indicators to show that others are monitoring their everyday activities and self-development, but minor occurrences hinted at other users' expectations of them – a Malay Muslim individual should remain one whether online or offline, and must act as one wherever and whenever. Personalities need not be displayed on Facebook but Malay Muslim behaviour must be made known even at a minimal level. These expectations are somehow understood by the respondents and the experiences they shared during the interviews, and the observation I conducted, showed them (strategically) complying with these expectations. The site affordances were used strategically to keep up with the expectations. One respondent, Sabrina, who is a cautious Facebook user, is wary of sharing vital information on Facebook, such as personal information and her current location, so she does this by using a Facebook linked location-based app, such as Foursquare. The site's lack of privacy led to her rather instrumental use of the site (sharing useful links such as links to general news) rather than more expressive use (sharing emotions or the things she does every day). Even with her instrumental use of Facebook, she tried to maintain her Muslim identity online. It could be as simple as not sharing photos of herself without hijab (veil) and those photos that are uploaded must be Islamically

acceptable – decent, modest and covered<sup>59</sup>. Sharing useful Islamic links moderately on Facebook is also one of her Islamic self-expressions. This type of sharing also highlighted gendered performance of Malay Muslim identity, where female users express the notion of decency and modesty that are embedded within their culture and religion. Gendered performance of identity are not uncommon on social networking sites and many other online sites, explored in other studies, focus on different aspects of online gender performance (Turkle, 1995; Kendall, 1998a; Kendall, 1998b; Van Doorn et al., 2007; Van Doorn, 2010; and Manago, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, other online sites such as MUDs, IRC, or blogs allow users to some extent to pretend to be someone else and create multiple personae, but on Facebook it becomes difficult although not impossible because of the home (family, friends, work colleagues) contexts brought online. What they disclose on the site can be validated in this nonymous environment where one's identity can be validated by those in one's network, thus what they present tends to reflect their offline self (Zhao et al., 2008). Being genuine online (reflecting offline self) is appreciated and believed to be the right netiquette. Many respondents believe in sharing information that is true to themselves. According to one respondent, her offline and online identity is similar and none of her friends online would think of her pretending to be someone she is not. She is careful with what she shares on Facebook in order to maintain an image that is true to oneself and reflect her offline identity – a Malay, a Muslim, and an educator among many others.

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<sup>59</sup> This notion of hijab (wearing and privacy) will be further discussed in Chapter seven in relation to performance of cosmopolitanism.

For some, being online is not complex because of the similarities in the self they present online and offline but for others their online experience becomes complex, because of these home contexts brought online. Being away from Malaysia but available online, put them in situations where they are expected to act like they are at home. This experience is shared by two respondents, Razali and Luqman. Razali, who prior to his arrival to the UK had set his mind to explore the cultural diversities the country, with its multicultural societies, had found himself being thrown into situations that required him negotiating his belief, his expected behaviour, and his wish to experience cultural differences. Clubbing and going to pubs according to him are common among university students and to experience going to these places is part of his plan (and to make new friends) that should not be missed, considering he will only be in the UK for a year and chances like these are hard to come by. He did not encounter any problems offline because his offline away (Durham) and the associated expectations are not collapsed together with the offline home (Malaysia). However, sharing such activities on Facebook where multiple contexts exist, is appalling, according to the students themselves.

Due to the home contexts brought online, sharing something not fitting his Malay Muslim identity, and something he is not used to, would cause concern among his family and friends. It is also important for him to appear unchanged and not appearing *culture shocked*. It is common for those at home to label someone who changed drastically when they are overseas as 'culture shocked', which for them holds a negative connotation. His strategy to maintain a positive face is by not

sharing those kinds of activities on his profile. Strategic self-disclosure and self-censorship allow him to keep the image he wishes others to see. Razali explained that his Facebook updates are restricted to certain *acceptable* (by his society) activities to prevent misinterpretations and people judging him based on what he shares. We could perceive here that he is essentially a cosmopolitan regardless what he share or not share on his Facebook. What he demonstrates here is a mental and practical self-censorship process to maintain his Malay Muslim image to some extent. Chapter seven will discuss this self-censorship and self-disclosure in relation to cosmopolitanism.

*Razali - I didn't you know set my status only certain people can read but for photos yes I keep several in private. I don't want to disclose everything to people. I don't want to - them to read everything through my Facebook because I still need to keep something secret from people. I don't want everyone (to) know whatever I'm doing, what I do or where ever I go. I don't want but certain things I don't mind to share but it depends on situation.*

*MM - what kind? Do you mind elaborating on that?*

*Razali - if let say I would go out at night I won't if I go to the club in Durham I won't check in or upload. If in Ustinov Fisher House yeah it's not a problem, it's not a problem if I go because currently I always, not always but few times I went out with the Germans. You know the Germans always bring me to the club. Even though I'm not interested I just follow them so that's not the thing I should share with people even my (Malay Muslim Malaysians) housemates don't know I'm going so I don't want to tell people.*

*MM - Is it because you are a Muslim...*

*Razali - it's not aahh about Muslim or not, I don't think I want to share, for me I don't mind what people want to think about me*

*as I said before aah because I know what I still know about my religion. I won't do something that (is) against my religion I know I have parents that I should take care of their...*

*MM - feelings?*

*Razali - feelings, my siblings...so instead of just do just thinking about the religion I will also thinking about my family so I combine both (culture and religion) which is I won't do something against and then put on Facebook but even though I'm not doing it but people might think in different way right "eh Razali went to bla bla bla" so I don't want people to keep judging me on my check-in but it depends sometime if I think I want to do it I will do it. It's not...they have no say.*

*MM - so you are trying to avoid misinterpretation and people judging you?*

*Razali - ahh (pause) yeah for some reason yes but it's not a main reason. I just keep I just think that I don't want people to I just don't want to ahh go somewhere and then check-in and upload the photo so because I don't want to. It's like bragging sometimes because in Malaysia it's not my life. I didn't do this in Malaysia and never went go to the club in Malaysia but here I go so it's like bragging sometimes so I don't like it.*

One respondent, Luqman, talked about the problems in responding the same way to different groups of people because different groups of people have their own expectations, ways of communicating (like jokes); thus it is important to present an appropriate self and personality to an appropriate group. This becomes complex online because on Facebook you have everyone there: *"Facebook is too open for everyone...in real life we do have different ways of interactions with different kinds of people (but) on Facebook you just basically react the same way you react, one way, which the other people you are not comfortable with might see your (behaviour and sharing)...it's too generalised...it's a bit uncomfortable"*. What he

shared explicates what Goffman espouses in his dramaturgical analysis of social interactions. Offline face to face interactions create social interactions within a bound (spatial) context, where only the social actors and probably those near them share, this performance of self could be considered less complex than online. On Facebook where the interactions between social actors are extended to the hidden, unintended audience the contexts multiply and it makes performances more complex than it already is.

While Razali does a mental self-censorship and practical self-disclosure before posting, other participants use different strategies to maintain the impressions they wish to keep. The strategies employed differ according to the individual's own preferences and knowledge of the site. One respondent, Luqman, skilfully uses the settings provided by Facebook to control access to his updates: *"I do play around with that stuff (settings)...customised it up until the point that only certain people can see what I want them to see"*. By selecting what to share with different groups of people, issues associated with collapsed contexts are avoided. Collapsed context for Luqman is easily negotiated by using the settings. This use of settings also exhibits the fluidity of the front (open) and back (private) stages as Goffman (1959: 127) has written *"still there are many regions which function at one time and in one sense as a front region and at another time and in another sense as a back region"*. Luqman's ability to change an open space (status updates) to a more private one, resulted in sharing of information that is appropriate for the context and audience, hence resulting in an effective presentation of self. Knowledge and mastery of the available settings make the presence of different audiences, especially immediate

family members who feel it their responsibility to correct what is wrong, a less complex matter. Important to this and the impression management discussed earlier, is the appropriate use of the privacy settings made available by Facebook to all users. However, not all users are familiar with these affordances, like Luqman, whose knowledge of the settings is quite vast which enables him to play around with the settings to reach a desired level of privacy and successfully negotiate freedom and control, public and private, home and away. Changes and updates on Facebook are not new for these students but can (and have) become a source of frustration when Facebook was assumed to have become less private, partly due to the infrastructure itself and also their lack of understanding of the available privacy settings and features. However, when one has no knowledge of the privacy settings or could not bother with setting up any lists, users resort to other different strategies such as Mohamad's refusal to accept users who would potentially disrupt his presentation of self or Razali's self-censorship and self-disclosure (Lampinen et al., 2011).

These strategies whether they are technical or basic censorship, highlight a number of matters close to what Goffman has written about offline social interactions; that social actors will try their best to keep up a front, specific performance in front of other actors, but what differentiates the online and offline social interactions are the complexities as well as the affordances brought about by the site's own infrastructures, features and settings. New media is changing what is generally considered as "front" and as "back" (public and private) due to its affordances. The prolonged performance resulting from the site's searchability and persistence



affordances (boyd, 2008) placed users in a difficult spot that requires constant monitoring of self and the control of access to own information through tweaking the front and back stages. These tweaks are done not only for the purpose of their self-presentation but also for maintaining social relationships with family members, friends, work colleagues and acquaintances, to name a few.

The experiences shared here showed users' specific negotiations online. They have to present a self that is acceptable for those in Malaysia. Even when they present different positive selves they did not stray far from their Malay Muslim self, but also tried to show their best self whilst at the same time ensuring they would not appear *fake* while doing so. The offline-online identity contest I initially thought of was not observed with this group of respondents, even for Mohamad who is a gay Malay Muslim. Their online and offline identities are coherent but what was obvious was the way they present their selves online in different contexts. Facebook has become a conduit for everyday sharing, to share thoughts, frustrations, happiness and most of the time involved strategic well thought of self-disclosure and self-censorship. Different facets of their self are expressed in different contexts allowed by Facebook's features and settings, such as using Message (Inbox) to share more intimate details with family or close friends or using Friends List to share specific information for specific group of Friends. I come back to the point made earlier that being on Facebook is not simply about having a profile or using it to communicate with others, but is laden with contradictions and challenges that they, the users, need to face and overcome. Whatever strategies (using settings or self-censorship) they employ they must ensure that they are

always composed, performing well and not tarnishing their reputation: in other words maintain a positive face.

### 5.3.2. Faceworking on Facebook

Goffman discussed the concept of Facework in everyday social interactions, *face* “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (Goffman, 1955:222), is practiced by the Malays in general, including my respondents. It is in their culture not to cause embarrassment to others in the presence of other people and to oneself. This concept of face is not alien in a Malay Muslim society. It is in fact one of the important concepts Malays embed in their everyday life, as Wan Abdul Kadir (1998: 87 cited in Noriati, 2005: 235) writes “(t)o uphold the value system, the Malays highlighted some concept central to their daily lives, the concept of shame, self-esteem, dignity, and face”<sup>60</sup>. Together they become important aspects/essence of an individual Malay Muslim self. To elaborate, this Malay concept of face involves an individual Malay taking extra care not only of his or her own face but also of his or her family’s and the society’s. It is common to hear the proverb ‘*Menconteng Arang di Muka*’<sup>61</sup> in the Malay community which means that an individual has done something considered unacceptable by the society and, as an effect, has managed to tarnish not only his or her reputation but also the reputation and honour of his

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<sup>60</sup> Translated by thesis author to English. The original text is in Bahasa Malaysia “*Bagi menegakkan sistem nilai, orang Melayu menekankan beberapa konsep yang diutamakan dalam kehidupan seharian mereka, iaitu konsep malu, harga diri, maruah, dan air muka*”.

<sup>61</sup> Direct translation of ‘*Menconteng Arang di Muka*’ is ‘Scribbling coal on own face’.

or her family. Maintaining positive face within these conventions is important offline but has become equally (if not especially) significant online too.

When a user is behaving out of character, others do not reprimand them directly but resort to using Message (Inbox) to express their dissatisfaction, although many would not do anything about the discrepancies they see online. However, what they saw and read affects their perception of the person sharing the materials deemed socio-culturally and religiously unacceptable and that individual's behaviour tarnishes their reputation and by implication, their family's. For many it is not easy to know what others think of them as one respondent said: *"I don't know sometimes our words we don't know how others perceive it...you don't intend to confuse that person, showing you are of a certain identity because you know who you are. So if you ask if I ever did it (misleading her online friends) I would say no. Even if I confuse some people it's not something I want to or intentionally put it as a wrong impression"* but knowing the basic acceptable sharing (from social grooming) allows them to negotiate between what is acceptable, and what is not, thus maintaining their reputation, image and face. Social grooming taught the users what to share, when to share by observing others' behaviour and learning from their experiences (bad or good). Those who decided to reprimand others for their unacceptable and out of character online behaviour are usually close family members or friends. For instance Luqman got reprimanded by his brother (via Facebook Message) due to the photo he accidentally shared on Facebook, a photo of him with his local friends at a party. He was not doing anything immoral but the photo insinuates that he was partying and drinking (alcohol), which is inappropriate

for his Malay Muslim identity. This self he accidentally presented due to the information others provided (Other Provided Information (OPI)), via Facebook photo tagging, affected the self he had to present to those from his own socio-cultural group, most importantly his family. By showing a self different than expected he not only affected (albeit slightly) his presentation of self as a whole but also those of his family – their honour. The online-offline attachment is demonstrated in this case; online and offline are not detached from one another, offline activities are commonly shared online (if not by the persons themselves, by their friends). Separating online and offline materials is not always straight forward. A user most probably has strictly defined public and private material but other users might have a loosely defined categorisation, hence making sharing certain materials acceptable to one user but not for the other person, and this complicates the self one wishes to keep up. All the people on the photo have equal rights to share their activities, in this case sharing that photo on Facebook; therefore asking the rest to refrain from uploading ‘unsuitable’ photos is difficult for this reason. Chapter seven will further discuss the varied definitions of private and public spheres online and their consequences to performance of cosmopolitan self.

*Luqman – This is not my personal experience, but I learn from it. Some people like post holiday picture and people in Malaysia well probably either jealous or also like it – ‘Looks like you are having so much fun over there, Are you studying?’ I would really hate to get that kind of comment. It is a bit unfair for people to say that. I’m the kind of person who avoids getting into that kind of situation. I got into one before which is bad. Well one time I went to a club with couple of friends, I do not drink, I’m not holding any drink either but my friends...they take pictures, they tag me so somehow because of Facebook setting is stupid back then*

*people cannot see my tag picture but if people can see my wall post and somebody tag my picture it is into the wall post so everybody can see it. I wasn't aware of that until my brother comment about it. My brother wasn't being critical he just asked me to untag or delete or something. Arrgh! It feels so uncomfortable knowing that some people might see it and you know people can assume anything.*

Consistencies in self-presentation create a positive value to one's image and this is understood by the students. One respondent, who is in the middle of improving herself to become a better (Muslimah) individual, has chosen to refrain from broadcasting via Facebook details of her daily life ("I went to college (today)"). Now she has started to share general knowledge, not necessarily Islamic or Quranic notes but words of wisdom; Islamic articles are shared by her moderately and with caution, so as not to portray a Muslimah self. For her it is not easy to post something one does not know, because other users can validate the information shared, and sharing too much information that she does not know in depth would make her look a fool.

*Sabrina – "I have photos that show my culture like Hari Raya photos and stuff but when it comes to Muslimah like I just...Ok none! I wear tudung [veil] so that should seem Muslimah enough because I personally think that I am not knowledgeable enough in the Islamic religion to comment anything Islamic you know and to portray via pictures that I'm an Islamist like you know I were to like do a charity and then take pictures and stuff. No. I don't have that kind of pictures. I know where I stand. I don't want to portray something that I'm not at yet...I mean it's enough that you don't do bad things that should say a lot about yourself"*

Her attitude towards posting Islamic articles is similar to Mohamad, a gay Malay Muslim, who does not share any Islamic materials on his Facebook. Not doing so helps in keeping his image as a homosexual, which he openly expressed on his profile through photos and status updates and avoids conflict of identities – Muslim and Gay. As he said *“I don’t really post any articles or anything about Islam but I do sometimes put Alhamdulillah...for me to me when you are being thankful you should be thankful to no one other than your creator I mean I put Alhamdulillah”*.

Showing piousness online is not expected but showing any kind of religious deviation is disapproved of, as another respondent shares during the interview *“I don’t mind people thinking I’m not pious, I would mind if people think I’m a bad person. I do worry of posting something Islamic if in case they know you go out clubbing and all but you post (Islamic stuff). It is so contradicting. Not posting is the best way...if I’m agreeing with the Islamic stuff let’s just keep it within me. They don’t have to know that”*. While expressing piousness online is an option, adhering to basic cultural religious expectations (and exhibiting them) is greatly emphasised and these students are aware of that fact. For these respondents, presenting self as a good individual, but not necessarily a good Islamic individual, is the best way to maintain a positive acceptable impression of themselves.

Unlike them, one respondent found himself committed to his Muslim identity while being in the UK. The observation I conducted on his Facebook profile supports what he shared during the interview that his Muslim identity is carried onto his Facebook, shaping his social interactions and online behaviour. His online sharing, the Pages he *Liked*, status updates, and photo uploads are mostly Islamic and

reflect his continuous search for self-improvements for the after-life. It is apparent that he is expressing his Muslim identity on Facebook. What he aims to be offline and what he portrays online are not in conflict with one another; therefore his self-presentation and managing positive face are less complex than other respondents, such as Mohamad, who has to restrict his profile from his family to protect his gay identity.

What this section, on exploring and presenting self on Facebook, has revealed is the complexities of the respondents everyday experiences on the site. Unlike earlier online sites that do not require or provide offline identity validation, users can create new personae and present different selves in contrast to their offline self. Facebook's infrastructure, however helps recreate the home context these respondents come from, resulting in an online context similar to home and bringing their socio-cultural expectations onto the sites, so shaping their online behaviour and experiences. They are involved in a constant negotiation process between home and away context, using different strategies such as self-censorship, self-disclosure, and customising friends list to present acceptable selves to their audiences and to maintain their positive image. When considering what to share and who to share their updates with, they consider the current audience (current friends). The site's affordance (persistence of data) that creates their electronic trace did not come up as a major concern in relation to new audiences but it does for their current audience. I am not sure why future audiences are not of a major concern for them. I assume their generally acceptable sharing, or their ability to change the privacy settings of their previous posts, to have a role in this. Knowing

that their sharing is acceptable to all users, at least uncontroversial, would diminish the chances of having it brought up in the future, by future friends, as being unacceptable or contested. By taking into account the view of their Lowest Common Denominator (LCD) audience, the hidden audience (those who would be disturbed by what is shared), the chances of their sharing being contested are minimised (Hogan, 2010). There is nothing in the interviews that indicates their concern with placing new friends on the already created Friends Lists<sup>62</sup>. Many respondents did not have lists, either because they are too busy to bother with creating them or they are not concerned with placing friends in specific groups (Vitak, 2012). Some respondents told of their status updates that are directed to specific people by typing their names, one by one, in the Audience Selector tool rather than creating a specific friends' list. Technological familiarity (including experience and skills) matters in managing control and access to one's profile (boyd and Hargittai, 2010) but without them the respondents could still manage their profile by employing other strategies such as self-censorship, which illustrates their negotiation of control and freedom and managing public and private on the site. Although presence of home context restricts their expression of self and activities on Facebook, using the site's privacy settings allow them to manage different selves to different groups, or to present only those snippets of self that are unproblematic

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<sup>62</sup> Based on my own use of the site, when new Friends Request comes in I always find myself in dilemma which List should the new Friend go into. I consider my past and my future updates and organise my friends according to my privacy concerns. For instance, Work list for colleagues and University Friends list for those who went to the same university. Many are also included in 2 or more lists so that a specific upload can be shared with that one user that belongs to the specific group I want to see my upload although that user also belongs to other group that I do not wish to share that upload with.



to their group. The decision not to disclose any activities on the site (selective sharing) is also a form of negotiating between what is allowed and what is not.

#### **5.4. Social Relationships Redefined**

Family and social relationships are another aspect of respondents' lives that is transformed by their online presence. ICTs in general have provided means for users to communicate with others and they become significant in the lives of those away from home to keep close relationships strong, to maintain other relationships intact, or to re-enact intimacies (Leander and McKim, 2003; Licoppe, 2004; Parreñas, 2005; Wilding, 2006; Madianou and Miller, 2011). For some, Facebook is another medium of communication akin to Skype, Mobile phone (including SMS), and E-mail. It supports their other medium of communication. For many others the site provides them with more than just communication with those back home or those near to them. It transforms how intimacies are experienced through these new forms of sociabilities. There were those days when those who left home to search for work or for education were obliged to rely on landline, public phones and written letters sent by post. Today, in this digital age, new forms of communication create more ways than before for anyone to communicate with others. Facebook in general offers users the opportunity to send direct messages through its Message (Inbox) or Chat features, while allowing both direct and indirect information to be shared as status updates and photos, thus transforming the way people can reach others. The affordances Facebook offers, such as its (a)synchronicity, allow presence and absence to be negotiated. For these students,

their absence from home is, in some ways, less felt because of their online presence. Relationships are maintained by being present on Facebook, thus giving their audience the feeling that they are always with them. For many, their Facebook (on desktops and smartphones) is always logged on, while they continue with their daily (academic) work. Having Facebook in the background while they write essays, read journal papers, browse online or watch videos on YouTube is common. Since the introduction of Facebook mobile, being logged on does not only suggest users logging in, spending time checking their Facebook and logging out, which again reiterate the argument made in previous section that categorising users as active or passive is complicated as users could be checking their Facebook multiple times as a discrete activity rather than actively commenting or sharing. The Facebook Mobile app allows users to be logged on 24 hours without actually being active – actively commenting, liking or posting anything. Users are always connected, always logged on, making the users accessible anytime but not necessarily responding to any incoming notifications when they are received. This brings a different meaning to the word “logged on”.

Being online as discussed earlier does not refer to a user logging in and logging off, like users in chat rooms, but indicates a continuous presence which is represented by a profile – profile image, cover photo, photo albums, status updates and other forms of sharing. Their Facebook profile remains accessible to their family and friends who can come back anytime to view their profile even when they, the owner, have logged off from the site. The micro-scale sharing the respondents are acquainted with, creates a sense of felt online presence. What matters to them is

shared on the site, allowing others to indulge and be part of their daily life, albeit from a distance. This continuous presence online is quite similar to Licoppe (2004) and Licoppe and Smoreda's (2005) idea of connected presence that highlighted the use of e-mail, short messaging services (SMS) and telephone to maintain relationships, where face to face interactions are not possible. Short calls or sending SMS to other parties signal presence and commitment in strengthening their ties and "(e)ach of these mediated interactions reactivates, reaffirms, and reconfigures the relationships" (Licoppe, 2004: 138). What differentiates their connected presence from this felt presence resulting from Facebook interaction is the extended continuity Facebook sharing provides. For a telephone call, interactions are on-going while the call is still connected; once it is disconnected there is no longer an interaction except for memories and emotions (lingering presence) left by that call. On Facebook anyone can interact with specific groups of users while others (intended or unintended audience) can follow their interactions silently. Whether one person is interacting with their friends or not, they are still engaging others with their everyday sharing at that moment when they were shared, or after some time has passed. What is shared remains on one's profile until it is removed, hence resulting to their uninterrupted presence.

These mediated interactions, however small they may be or insignificant they seem, are important. Basic or intimate (not overly) sharing is expected in friendship and this sharing is important for a relationship to develop (Salwen and Stacks in Bortree, 2005: 32). It indicates commitment in friendship at a minimum level. The users are not obligated to share but doing so helps strengthen relationships. When a

respondent who was near to her PhD thesis submission deadline deactivated her Facebook due to the pressure to communicate with her F/friends, together with the worry she has about her colleagues asking her when she will submit her thesis, a number of her friends sent her texts messages inquiring about her absence from Facebook. She finds it important then to keep her Facebook activated, despite not sharing anything. Her Facebook presence is enough to signal presence and commitment to friendship. Deactivation of Facebook means she is gone from her friends' network, unsearchable hence absent. The deactivation affordance provided by Facebook demonstrates the loose concept of online Friendship, as discussed earlier. When communication becomes a burden and less fulfilling, a relationship can always be disconnected. The aforementioned affordances the site offers transforms the meaning of absence and presence. First, being absent physically (away from home) is replaced by online presence, such that the users are not actually disconnected from their family and friends back home. Second, being absent online (logging off) is less significant because the user (his/her self and identity) remains on their profile and where they left their digital footprint on the site, such as leaving comments on friends' status, on their photos and liking their updates. Their online presence also effectively transforms family relationships, as they did with their expression of self in Facebook, is an issue to be discussed shortly.

### 5.4.1. Online Parenting

The new form of sociabilities (including online presence) the site offers for family relationships, effectively reconstructs parenting forms and the commitment to communicate with family members (Madianou and Miller, 2011). Most of the students I interviewed are single, therefore I have not obtained a deep understanding of parenting online but, based on the experiences they shared and the observations I conducted on their Facebook profiles, I observed significant online parenting where parents monitor their children's (my respondents) online activities. Sometimes siblings act on behalf of their parents if they are not on Facebook. They seem to feel obligated to monitor and reprimand their own siblings' online behaviour. One respondent's experiences, discussed in a previous section, provide an example of 'sibling parenting' online. This obligation to monitor and remind others of their actions is important in Islam and written in the Al-Quran - *Amr Bil Ma'ruf* and *Nahi 'Anil Munkar* (Enjoining Good and Forbidding Wrong) and also generally practiced in the Malay community.

One respondent's (Balqies) experiences also demonstrate a form of parent surveillance or monitoring on Facebook. Physical absence of parents is not a constraint for keeping tabs on their children. As previously mentioned, interactions are not necessarily conducted between two social actors, the affordances the site offers, such as the persistence of information, allow the information previously sent to be searched and read, thus creating the asynchronous form of engagement. Balqies' everyday sharing on Facebook allows her family, particularly her father,

into the loop with what is going on in her life. During my observation of her profile, I noticed a large number of her photos (such as photos from her travels and everyday photos) have been tagged with her father's Facebook name. I mentioned this during the interview and according to her most of the photo tagging was done by her father himself. She does not know the reasons behind his actions and could only assume that is his way of keeping himself up to date with what is going on in her life. I took the initiative to visit her father's profile, which was open to the public at that time and observed those photos of Balqies on his profile. As I could not find the exact reason for this behaviour, I could only suggest that by tagging the photos, they will always be available on his profile and are relatively easy to find, as compared to checking Balqies's profile page and her photo albums. This could demonstrate a new form of parents' online surveillance of their children's activities (from a distance), without putting too much pressure on the children to directly communicating their everyday activities. Such photo sharing was most probably not intended for her parents alone but could be accessed by them; commitment to communicate in this case becomes very relaxed. Instead of having to constantly call/text/e-mail their family, such indirect engagement allows the relationship and intimacies to be maintained.

However, not everyone uses Facebook to strengthen family intimacies; Mohamad for instance, finds having family on Facebook a burden. Because of his homosexuality he employs a strict no family policy. It is exactly because of the potential surveillance and parenting online that puts him off from accepting friends' requests from his sisters and aunts/uncles. Having them on his Facebook would

bring more problems for him. He might be able to control his sharing to suit certain groups of recipients but there is always the constant worrying over what others might share on his profile that might be visible to an unintended audience. Even if he is successful in managing Self Provided Information (SPI), information provided by others (OPI) can disrupt his presentation of self to those groups he would not want to *come out* to. Mendelson and Papacharissi's (2011) study on college students' Facebook photo galleries noted that identity presentations are not simply portrayed through the profile and status but also through comments from other users. For Mohamad, being a gay Malay Muslim and having families on Facebook would restrict his expression of self. His no family policy is re-enforced by not accepting any family members, even those closest to him (sisters) and by not sharing any photos of his family. His Facebook is strictly about himself, a site where he can be *out* in the open as much as possible. When I asked him the reasons for his decision he answered *"I think there is too much information I mean if I do add then I couldn't be as out as I'm"*.

As discussed in the previous section, liberation of self online cannot be fully realised due to the home offline context being replicated online. The respondents find themselves constantly reworking themselves within the emergent, albeit limited, freedom. This applies not only to social relationships online but also to presentation of self, as discussed in the previous section. The experiences of those mentioned earlier exemplify negotiation processes within the context of emergent freedom and continuous control. For many, mundane everyday sharing does not pose a problem because what they share is generally within the expectations of others.

However, sharing is most certainly not straightforward for other users, such as Luqman and Razali, who both enjoyed going out with friends to clubs and parties to experience life while in the UK and to be socially accepted by their non-Malay Muslim friends, and Mohamad who is a homosexual. Due to the nature of their activities that do not conform to the norms, their Facebook sharing would cause concerns and doubts among their Facebook Friends. They found going online and being online is more complex than it should be for, as Luqman commented "*It is such a complicated social experience when it should be natural. You over-think quite a lot of stuff*". The collapsed contexts, the possibilities of others disrupting the self a particular user wishes to present, due to the affordances Facebook offers allowing other users to comment on anyone's updates (photos, links or status) to name a few, put them in a position where it is necessary to employ strategies to survive online, to maintain a presence that is acceptable and not contested, as discussed in the previous section.

To reiterate, being on Facebook is not as simple as it should be. Facebook is not just a medium of communication but is burdened with challenges, constraints and conflicts that require the users to effectively negotiate their everyday situations and contexts to acquire the benefits of being on Facebook. While the site has massive potential for maintaining intimacies it also has triggered many relationship strains, which are not predominantly caused by the site's infrastructure but by the users themselves. Collapsed contexts, other parties' misinterpretation of others' behaviour are also the main culprits in relationship strains.



## 5.5. Summary

The everyday online experiences of the Malay Malaysian students presented and discussed in this chapter cannot possibly cover, in full detail, their individual experiences and contexts; what we have here are significant examples in helping to understand the complexities of one's Facebook experiences. Going online and being online is laden with contradictions, challenges, and negotiations and is personal. The infrastructure of the site itself, the respondents' own experiences, subjectivities and identities play specific roles in shaping their everyday online experiences. This chapter has shown that their initial motivations for using Facebook evolved overtime to include other activities. A user, whose initial purpose of having a Facebook was to communicate with family and friends back home and those in the UK, found themselves using the site for more than just a tool for communication. Being online becomes a negotiation of absence and presence, control and freedom, private and public and home and away. Users are also constantly reworking themselves and their relationships within this new form of online sociability. Their experiences have also revealed the benefits as well as the problems of being online. The site that is supposedly neutral becomes laden with emotions, values, beliefs, and expectations brought online by the users, "people's practices, expectations, and social norms have also co-evolved alongside the technical features and social interaction opportunities" (Ellison and boyd, 2013: 152) Rather than see a site where social networking is dominant we see interesting aspects of one's life recreated, organised and shared online. In the case of these respondents they saw their home context recreated due to the presence of their offline friends and the

dominant Malay Muslim Malaysian context online. We know from the experiences shared in this chapter, the socio-cultural and religious expectations of these offline family and friends shaped their online behaviour, as expressed in their presentation of self and their social relationship with family and friends. The site's infrastructure also creates specific use of the site, equally important is the infrastructural expectations that work together with socio-cultural and religious contexts brought from offline. What then are the consequences of such bounded contexts to cosmopolitan cultivation on the site? Facebook, as I have discussed in the literature review (chapter two) and the conceptual framework chapter (three), has potential, considering its virtual reach, in bringing people from different backgrounds together that are not spatially bound, unlike offline interactions, and its affordances could very much provide the platform for further social interactions and engagements, creating the pool of resources for users to draw from. But what we witnessed here are rather bounded (but negotiated) contexts and reach that are similar to the offline contexts. What then are the implications of these contexts to the cultivation of cosmopolitan consciousness of the Malay Malaysian students in this research? Would this 'cultural' bubble filter hamper their potential in developing cosmopolitan sensibilities? What discursive resources are then available on their Facebook? In addition to that, the contexts shaped the respondents presentation of self. Whether they intend to use the site for presenting specific self, or not, the site eventually becomes a platform to perform their "self"; selves that are not detached or different from their offline self but are different facets of that offline self. For many their online offline selves are similar and coherent but for some, such as Razali, Luqman and Mohamad, the sharing of everyday activities

becomes complex because of the contestation in what they do and who they are (and are expected to be). Mohamad, a gay Malay Muslim, found it hard to express his gay identity if his family is on Facebook friends list but not to the rest of his Facebook friends who know his online offline self to be coherent. Razali found himself having to strategically self-censor to prevent any potential discrepancies in his identity. Luqman similarly finds himself using settings to protect his image and his family's honour. Their online experiences highlighted active performance of self, the impression they wish to manage and the use of the settings, as well as behavioural strategies, to manage sharing. It is one of the objectives of this research to investigate what cosmopolitan self, if there is any, would be performed on the site within these bounded contexts. The next two empirical chapters, six and seven, will explore and discuss cultivation of cosmopolitan consciousness and performance of cosmopolitan self on Facebook.

# Chapter Six

## Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism – Cultivating Cosmopolitan Consciousness From Facebook?

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### 6.1. Introduction

One of the main aims of this thesis is to study cosmopolitanism that is grounded in the everyday experiences of Malay Malaysian students in the United Kingdom, as expressed by the respondents themselves and not to be economically or politically boxed, as were those analysed by the earlier scholars (Souchow Yao, Terence Chong and Joel Kahn in chapter two) of the Malaysian discourse. While openness to cultural differences for many is accidental (Iqtidar, 2012); or a willing act to seek for differences and to embrace them (Hannerz, 1990); for some extending openness is seen as a strategy to navigate everyday life (Kothari, 2008); and a life project (Doherty and Singh, 2005). This research has found that the students' openness to cultural differences varies and includes all of the above. Extending openness is not a straight forward matter, nor is it automatic, due to corporeal or virtual travel (Szerszynski and Urry, 2002). It is laden with dilemmas, contradictions, inclusion and exclusion (Kim, 2011), ignorance and acceptance, strategically expressed (Kothari, 2008), and at times involved the social actors self-doubting themselves. Individual's personalities, motivations, worldviews, backgrounds and experiences create specific forms of openness to differences, according to contexts and time, hence the nuanced cosmopolitan sensibilities cultivated. This highlights the four

important aspects in understanding cosmopolitanism, as discussed in previous chapters: temporal, contextual, individual and spatial. Openness can never be the same among individuals due to these four factors. For my respondents, openness is not simply accepting differences but also negotiating and ignoring differences or similarity within their own religious and cultural conventions; cosmopolitan experiences which I label as Rooted Muslim cosmopolitanism. Such a concept may be operationally defined as a form of cosmopolitanism grounded in their Malay Muslim identity, a backdrop used to navigate their everyday social encounters and experiences online and offline. Their openness is dynamic and selective, in the sense that it is directed to specific issues and situations, and is always negotiated around their Malay Muslim identity and the identity of the others.

Introducing a new term, Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism, seemingly creates another form of cosmopolitanism to add to the already immense cosmopolitanism discourse. However, the use of this term is justified by the respondents everyday experiences with cultural others and those from their own group the extension of cosmopolitan sensibilities using religious discursive resources such as being a good Muslim who does more than just tolerating others: stressing respect, compassion, and peaceful living. This religious approach to cosmopolitanism is not unfamiliar to Malaysian studies as reviewed in chapter two. There are already different forms of Muslim cosmopolitanism experienced at the national and local levels. Terence Chong's analysis of *Islam Hadhari* has demonstrated an Islamic form of cosmopolitanism at the national level, similar to Joel Kahn's findings of Malays in the Malay world, where new forms of Muslim sensibilities have emerged among

the Malay Muslims, those who have a global outlook and seek for economic progress<sup>63</sup>. What differentiates the findings of this research from theirs is the detailed analysis of the respondents' everyday experiences outside of the country's economic and political development as this research centres on their everyday social interactions and experiences with others, online and offline.

Attaching cosmopolitanism to *Rooted* and *Muslim* obviously contradicts the general (earlier) understanding of the concept that is universal, all-encompassing and transcending socio-cultural and religious backgrounds<sup>64</sup>. What this Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism highlights is the expression of openness to cultural others and those from their own cultural group that are grounded foremost in their identity as a Muslim, rather than race or national identity or even for some entirely accidental reason resulting from the experience of living far from home in a multicultural society. Being away from home however is not a condition for a cosmopolitan creation, as experiences of these respondents will illustrate later in this chapter.

Facebook, the main site for this research, is considered an open space, holding enormous potential for bringing people together and connecting people all over the world; because of this it allows users to have a glimpse of others' way of life and experiences through their everyday sharing. Ayse Caglar and Alexa Robertson, as discussed in chapter three, spoke of the potential of cultivating cosmopolitan

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<sup>63</sup> As stated in chapter two, Kahn's cosmopolitan Malays' characteristics are similar to Dr. Mahathir's New Malay.

<sup>64</sup> Similar to other forms of cosmopolitanism; for example Appiah's National Cosmopolitanism and Iqtidar's Muslim Cosmopolitanism that has moved beyond single belonging to a particular form of experiences and stresses dual or multiple attachments of the cosmopolitans.

consciousness, creating what is called mediated cosmopolitanism through advertisements and news. The Internet as a technology (and a space), one of many types of cosmopolitan communications; (Norris and Inglehart, 2009) has made immediate macro- and micro-scale sharing possible and has increased human reach (Horrigan et al., 2006 in Donath, 2008). Facebook offers such micro-scale sharing, via multimodal interactions, that brings to the surface information that is relevant to the users/sharers' everyday life<sup>65</sup>. As has been emphasised in chapter three, it is no longer about producers narrating the lives of others but of individuals themselves deciding what to disclose. This freedom in sharing information and other materials on Facebook creates a different pool of information than those of the macro-scale sharing; information that is pertinent to the users' immediate daily experiences and life. Information that is not only obtainable from the identity sharing section of the user's profile but also from the user's interactions with their friends. Vast amounts of information, coming from people with different backgrounds, perspectives and experiences, create a bottomless pool of resources other users can dig into and draw from. Observing others has become easier, and especially now with the Facebook Mobile app, information can be accessed from anywhere and anytime. Facebook should be able to provide more discursive resources and everyday information for the respondents to help cultivate their cosmopolitan sensibilities. Despite all these affordances, has the site facilitated cultivation of cosmopolitan consciousness through the information *pushed* to users daily; information that users themselves decide to share, exposing minutiae of their

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<sup>65</sup> Ash Amin (2002) in his work on offline social encounters has suggested such a micro-scale sharing (micro-publics of everyday social contact and encounter) has the potential in bringing people together.

everyday life which could possibly create infinite cultural resources for others to learn from? Has Facebook really extended reach and understanding of Others? Or are we witnessing an illusion of cosmopolitanism? Have we been giving too much credit to Facebook by stating the potentialities it offers for cosmopolitanism? Has micro-scale sharing on Facebook created a similar consciousness and provided the discursive resources users can draw from? This chapter, using the empirical data gathered from my respondents, discusses the experiences of the Malay Malaysian students online and their cultivation of cosmopolitan sensibilities, supported by their contextualised daily Facebook engagements and interactions. These sensibilities are drawn from their experiences and everyday lives online, that are not isolated from their offline everydayness. Chapter five has illustrated, using those empirical findings, that their everyday lives on Facebook are very much lived and experienced within their specific socio-cultural contexts, that are not accepted uncontested but are, to a degree, negotiated. It is within this context that this chapter is written. How sensibilities developed, what discursive resources they draw from their specific contexts and networks 'to deal with emergent agendas and issues related to...cultural diversity, the global, and otherness' (Kendall et al., 2009: 108), and the obstacles to possible resources, are discussed here. Chapter five has shown that their networks are generally narrow, comprising their own cultural group creating what seems like a home away from home online. The dominance of one's own ethnic group – Malay Muslim Malaysians -- somehow restricts the amount and types of information available to these students. Due to their lack of motivation to seek for new and different forms of information and their narrow network, the scope of potential discursive resources they could draw from is limited



but this does not make them less cosmopolitan and unable to extend openness to others. Offline individualised experiences, predominantly religious teachings, become resources that feed into their cosmopolitan sensibilities. This thesis thus acknowledged the nuanced sensibilities that are cultivated according to their individualised experiences. What readers will observe in this chapter is the students' specific openness, flexibilities and tolerance, those that are not project-based or developed out of bigger socio-cultural and political issues, such as those critiqued in chapter two, but are part of their strategies for navigating their everyday lives while away from home and negotiating cultural differences for their future self. This chapter will demonstrate the complexities in searching, measuring, labelling and experiencing openness within the discussion of what I label as Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism.

## **6.2. Who's Cosmopolitanism? What cosmopolitanism?**

Cosmopolitanism has recently been understood to exemplify both national and global belonging and obligations following studies that brought to front the possibilities of an individual locally grounded and yet globally exposed (Robbins, 1998a; Robbins, 1998b; Szerszynski and Urry, 2002; Calhoun, 2003; Kahn, 2008; Kothari, 2008; Beck, 2011). It is no longer accepted simply as total detachment from socio-cultural ground and being a citizen of the world but openness and self-distantiation that are experienced while being rooted to one's locality or nation and grounded in everyday life (Appiah, 2006). What have these students experienced every day? What form of cosmopolitanism emerged out of their daily interactions

and contexts? To whom is their openness extended and for what purpose? This chapter expresses and discusses the cosmopolitanism of a group of Malay Malaysian Muslim students who were in the UK pursuing their studies and were culturally exposed to people from different socio-cultural and religious backgrounds; students who spent between a year and four years in the host country. Their cosmopolitan conditions are the creation of their absence from home, presence in the host country, online presence on Facebook and also their life back at home, which saw them negotiating their everyday life in the presence and absence of cultural others and those from (their) own cultural group.

This group of students are capable of being cosmopolitan individuals who are open to cultural others and willing to engage and seek for differences (Hannerz, 1990) and similarities; and constantly reworking cultural materials presented to them, using their own frames of interpretations (Ang, 1996), backgrounds and experiences to understand and negotiate their differences and similarity. Hannerz (1990) describes cosmopolitanism as openness to differences and willingness to engage with others, so in this simple definition anyone who is open to cultural differences can be regarded as cosmopolitan. If we were to take his definition, anyone having even the least of his cosmopolitan characters would be considered a cosmopolitan, such as in the experiences of a number of the respondents with wide networks, their claims to be an open individuals and comfortable engaging with cultural others. However, what the empirical findings illuminate are multifaceted expressions and ideas of openness and that they are extended differently to different groups of social actors – Others (British, other International Students,

Malaysian Chinese and Malaysian Indian) including own group Malay Muslim Malaysian. This finding led a simple understanding of openness to differences inadequate to grasp their experiences, the processes involved and the specific discursive resources they draw from. Becoming a cosmopolitan in its narrowest and general sense indicates someone who is becoming more open and flexible to differences. Those who are not, could be branded un-cosmopolitan or possibly parochial, but what I argue for is acknowledging the complexities in categorising an individual as a cosmopolitan or un-cosmopolitan, based merely on their level of openness at a specific time and on a specific matter. The act of strictly defining cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan is indeed “an unc cosmopolitan thing to do” (Pollock et al., 2000: 577). Being online, having a vast Facebook network, or living in a multicultural nation like the UK, does not automatically make that person a cosmopolitan, but it does provide the setting for potential encounters, whether they are cultural, political or social. What cosmopolitan and what cosmopolitanism are in their case, cannot be measured simply by using basic indicators of openness. However it would be possible through assessing their motivations to become open, to seek for more than just what are available on their news feed, or lack of motivations to be one, and to do so respectively, as have been proposed in chapter three; also of equal importance is the issue of to whom is cultural understanding and openness selectively extended to. Cosmopolitanism, as discussed in chapter three, has its temporal, contextual, individual aspects; therefore an individual experience and expression today, at this very moment, could exemplify a cosmopolitan character but later the same individual could be demonstrating behaviour that differs greatly from the very openness cosmopolitanism entails.

Throughout this chapter (largely using extracts from interviews conducted), we shall see the delicate nature of this binary category of cosmopolitan and un-cosmopolitan behaviour and due to this, this researcher is reluctant to label someone a cosmopolitan or un-cosmopolitan (Skey, 2012), but rather to accept cosmopolitan sensibilities as deeply embedded within an individual, expressed according to contexts, time and audience.

### **6.2.1. Navigating Everyday Life Away from Home**

Travelling is recognised by many cosmopolitanism scholars as one of the contributing factors to cosmopolitan creation, which is not a surprise considering the potential exposure and experiences travelling creates. It is seen by some people as liberating, because it allows an individual to lose themselves and find a new different self: “(w)e travel, initially, to lose ourselves; and we travel, next, to find ourselves. We travel to open our hearts and eyes and learn more about the world than our newspapers will accommodate. We travel to bring what little we can, in our ignorance and knowledge, to those parts of the globe whose riches are differently dispersed. And we travel, in essence, to become young fools again – to slow time down and get taken in, and fall in love once more” (Iyer, 2009: 1). This liberating experience is not universal. The findings of this research showed that corporeal or virtual travelling to new unfamiliar places/spaces does not create an individual that is free-floating (without any attachments to ethnic or religious identities) nor does it automatically create cosmopolitans. These students’ physical absence from their home country, Malaysia, does not place them out of their socio-

cultural contexts, which could possibly uproot them from their ascribed identities; rather they find themselves experiencing *home* away from home (online and offline) as chapter five has already discussed.

In the case of this research, which focuses on the potential of social interactions on Facebook in cultivating cosmopolitan sensibilities, their online presence, especially their ethnically dominated Facebook network, replicates their dominant Malay Muslim contexts from offline and are appropriated on their sites, creating collapsed contexts within which their cosmopolitanism is shaped. These students' online activities are shaped by the identity they brought from offline; as Nora has said "*I think...you carry your identity wherever you go (online). It's a good principle for Muslims...it's not like you can't have fun but you can have fun in a defined Muslim way*". Their "cultural identities reflect the common (online) experiences and shared cultural codes which provide (them), as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning" (Hall, 1990 : 223). Due to these contexts (both home and away), the students found themselves straddling between being a Muslim and being an individual not tied by religious or/and ethnic identity. In their experiences, expressions of openness becomes a strategy to navigate their everyday life offline and online, openness that is extended to a specific group of people.

A case in point, for the respondent Luqman, who admitted to being interested in the lifestyle of others, especially the British and to embrace differences; his conceptualisation of a culturally open individual is he/she who is not burdened by culture or religion and could, in the presence of cultural others, detach those

elements of his ascribed identity that are seemingly out of place in a different context<sup>66</sup>. To appear so, he presents himself (through online and offline sartorial presentation and speech) as an individual who is not tied to culture or religion. Despite this stress on presenting self as a free-floating individual without any attachments, especially religious related, Luqman insisted that his ascribed identity (Malay Muslim) remains embedded within and when encountering cultural others he sometimes draws from his Malay Muslim identity to make inferences and negotiate their differences. Here he perceptually separates cosmopolitan sensibilities (thoughts and feelings) and actual presentation of his “potential” cosmopolitan self. What this separation supports is the distinction between sensibilities and performances, as has been argued in chapter three of this thesis. It shows how important it is to acknowledge the difference between sensibilities and performance of cosmopolitanism and how sensibilities are felt, formed and later expressed in the form of actual performance. Chapter seven, on strategic performance of openness, will explore this further.

Presenting self as an individual for him is important to ensure his social acceptance into the host’s society. This idea of presenting self as free-floating (to some extent), is influenced by his imagined/assumed cultural others’ perception of Muslims, following the recent and frequent acts of terrorism that saw Muslims being labelled as terrorists and perceived negatively. In Luqman’s circumstance, openness is regarded as a strategy, discussed further in chapter seven, which he employs while

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<sup>66</sup> Different context here refers to the western cultural context, which is qualitatively different from the Malay Muslim context.

being away from home that is similar to Kothari's (2008) global peddlers, whose openness to differences is a strategy for survival, a strategy to show breadth of cultural knowledge or ability to act competently in any social situations.

Engagement with cultural others is important in creating one's economic network and connections. Whether this can be considered a cosmopolitan act, or simply a strategy to survive in a strange land, depends on our conceptualisation of the concept and how openness is expressed. While cosmopolitanism can be regarded as a willing act, a process favourably embraced (especially in earlier studies focusing on elite travellers and migrants who seek to embrace the world and be part of it), a number of studies (Lamont and Aksartova, 2002; Park and Abelmann; 2004; Doherty and Singh, 2005; Waters, 2005; Huang and Yeoh, 2005; Kothari, 2008; Woodward and Skrbiš, 2012; Skrbiš and Woodward, 2013) acknowledge the act of openness as a strategy and, in the case of the global peddlers, something they have to do to survive which could eventually become "embedded morally and ethnically" (Kothari, 2008: 500). This form of cosmopolitanism could also fall under Ong's (2009: 456) Instrumental Cosmopolitanism, where the knowledge of the world is used to promote oneself. Following these studies that see cosmopolitanism as "more of a strategy, resource or frame of managing meaning in settings infused by different types of individuals and groups" (Woodward and Skrbiš, 2012: 136), I contend that these cosmopolitan sensibilities even with a specific purpose are an expression of cosmopolitanism, considering the search and acceptance of differences and similarities demonstrated. Survival in a strange land creates a form of purposive consciousness, which is quintessentially cosmopolitan. In retrospect,

these students already have the characteristics of a cosmopolitan, as have been described by others scholars, such as being able to distance oneself, re-evaluating one's own norms and practices (Iqtidar, 2012), the mentality and skills to fit and blend in with the Others (Molz, 2006). As another student, Amal, has said of her experience being in the UK, which has provided her with the opportunities to meet people from other countries, that over time she realised *"life is just not about you being Malay...there are different people, different lifestyles, different backgrounds so you appreciate the difference"*. Leaving behind her comfort zone (at home) has made her *"a better person compared to before, in every way"* as she expressed below. The forms of self-consciousness and self-discovery here vary depending on the individuals themselves.

*Amal - Ever since I came to Durham during my Masters year we already feel that life is not just about you being Malay, there are different people different lifestyles, different backgrounds so you appreciate the difference. You don't feel like "I'm a Malay"...you feel like it's nice to know people from India...you can ask about their personality and other things, they wouldn't mind sharing it with you because we are different. If we are in our comfort zone we need to be more or less the same so that kind of intellectual discussion is not abundant to experiment with, but when we meet people Yes! (Some words/sentences are translated to English by the thesis author).*

### **6.2.2. Future Cosmopolitan Self – A Life Project**

It is common to come across papers discussing cosmopolitanism as liberal and cosmopolitan actors as free floating individuals without ethnic and/or religious



attachments (and also papers that contest this understanding of the concept), the experiences of the students demonstrate a specific form of rooted cosmopolitanism, rooted in their Malay Muslim identity. They are not free floating, as has been argued by a number of scholars of contemporary individuals and society (such as Bauman, 2000) but are individuals who, to a certain extent, are confined to (and by) their socio-cultural and religious backgrounds. This is apparent in their online actions and behaviour in which their identity as Malay and Muslim effectively shaped their actions and expressions of openness, reinforced by the presence of members of their group on the site discreetly or openly monitoring their every actions and the consequences of actions deviating from what are acceptable. The “(c)ore values, such as strong feelings of national identity, traditional attitudes toward morality, and orientations toward authority, acquired during the formative years of early youth, may prove relatively enduring” (Norris and Inglehart, 2009: 39); such values have become a reference point for the students to navigate their present and future lives. The consequences of acting out of the expected norms have been discussed in chapter five and will also be further explored in chapter seven when considering the performance of cosmopolitanism. This idea (and the acceptance) of a cosmopolitan individual as socio-culturally and religiously rooted is important to the cosmopolitanism discourse that is still working towards further understanding (grounding) of cosmopolitanism and its actors. It is significant to our discussion of cosmopolitanism as a life project. What forms of cosmopolitans are created from their rooted experiences and what of their future cosmopolitan self? Doherty and Singh, (2005) in their research on Asian international students’ objectives for studying outside their home countries have

found that international education provides them with necessary skills and experiences for their future self, such as “acquiring English proficiency as a form of symbolic or cultural capital which can be exchanged for improved work opportunities in the transnational and local labour market” (Doherty and Singh, 2005: 11). Their overseas experiences become their “biographical investments in liquid times”. This is similar to Dr Mahathir’s New Malay (*Melayu Baru*) who, through education, created a new middle class who are highly educated, economically well-off and having some form of cosmopolitan characters such as English language proficiency and global (Western) cultural capital. In contrast to the experiences of the students in this research, cultural capital, and in their cases cultivating and extending openness, is not restricted to future economic well-being but generally for social development, everyday experiences and encounters with cultural others. Indeed they exhibit a ‘mental revolution’ (but different from Dr Mahathir’s characterisation) in the form of heightened social exposure, mental engagement with social others and social solidarity. This approach to conceptualising cosmopolitan actors provides this research (and the cosmopolitanism discourse) with a different angle to perceive this cosmopolitan life project, a life project that is not confined to economic activities and development but also to everyday social interactions and future self and, for these Malaysian students, conditions which will become the platform for further social progress of their already multicultural society.

We can observe this cultivation of a rooted cosmopolitan self in the experience of Farid. A second year undergraduate student, whose offline and Facebook friends

are predominantly Malay Muslim from Malaysia, admitted he had found his true Islamic self while in the UK. According to him, his Facebook engagements contribute to his personality development. Despite not having any intentions to go beyond his socio-cultural and religious network, his engagements with his Malay Muslim Malaysian friends were sufficiently significant to expose him to different ideas, beliefs and lifestyles that will be useful to help him prepare for his future (self).

*“There are lots of things going on around me that contribute to my personality development. One of them is Facebook. One thing that I find about Facebook is that it helps me to know there are lot of patterns of thinking among people outside there. You know you just meet lots of people. You know they just want to bombard others with their ideas and force others to accept their ideas and you can meet also people who like I said earlier that everything they are doing 24 hours (are posted on Facebook). This kind of things helps me to realise than one day I’m gonna go back to Malaysia and I’m gonna meet this kind of people, I’m going work with them, I’m gonna live with them in Malaysia, so it prepares me in a certain way to accept many kinds of things many kind of people that are around me”.*

Facebook creates openness but one that is not necessarily based on exposure to cultural differences but also from one’s own group, which could eventually be extended to others. Not friending strangers or having a limited network online does not stop cultivation of cosmopolitan consciousness, but the types of cultural information received to allow greater reflexivity become narrow. Farid’s account above demonstrates a form of openness (not necessarily acceptance of differences) experienced within his Malay Muslim Malaysian group. It is common to associate

cosmopolitanism to openness to cultural differences, openness by an individual from different socio-cultural and religious group to another. However, in Farid's case, openness is extended only to those sharing the same beliefs, values, customs, and language. Could this then be considered a cosmopolitan act? Can cosmopolitan openness be insular and confined within own cultural group? His experience here suggests that cultivation of cosmopolitan sensibilities need not come from social interactions that transcend a cultural group but those occurring within can become a form of training of self. This calls for rethinking of the relationships between social interactions and cosmopolitan consciousness and what instigates an individual openness to others. If we were to take cosmopolitanism as openness both within and beyond a group, everyone is a potential/possible cosmopolitan, which removes any exclusivity from the title 'cosmopolitan'. What is cosmopolitanism then? Do we need to continue searching for cultural cosmopolitans? What I am suggesting here is not the end of our search for cosmopolitans or cosmopolitanism but a rethinking of how we conceive cosmopolitanism and label cosmopolitans. I argue that by considering inwards cosmopolitanism in our attempt to develop or ground this elusive concept we would be more sensitive to those who do not quite fit the characters of a cosmopolitan because of their narrow, ethnically dominated network and those who are seemingly unwilling to engage with cultural others<sup>67</sup>. This refusal to engage is in no way anti cosmopolitan but it highlights the complexities of extending and performing openness. Chapter seven, using the

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<sup>67</sup> Also the focus by some cosmopolitanism scholars who recognised working class and those groups of people who do not fit into the general, elite, and exclusive cosmopolitan character.

empirical data, will discuss 'refusal to engage' as a strategy to present self as an open individual.

Coming back to the earlier discussion of future cosmopolitan self and inward openness, expressions of openness in Farid's case is not just of that moment but also of the future; how Farid sees his future self. The openness that he extended to his Malay Muslim Malaysian friends was seemingly used as a reflexive training for his future self, a cosmopolitan self, although during the interview he did not express his desire 'to be a cosmopolitan'. This again elucidates the temporal aspect of cosmopolitanism and that an individual is capable of being a cosmopolitan regardless his/her ethnically dominated network. That one cannot be labelled as 'cosmopolitan' now, does not indicate a possible future un-cosmopolitan individual, or that if one is a cosmopolitan today he/she will always be one. Cosmopolitanism, is not exactly a fixed category; a dichotomous either/or here. Openness is contextualised and always a possibility. Ong (2009: 465) deals with similar complexities by proposing cosmopolitanism as a continuum, where it is more fruitful to see individual "weav(ing) in and out of being open and closed to difference – in the rhythm of daily life" which I contend is a practical way to understand cosmopolitanism that is elusive and contested.

### **6.2.3. Seeking for Differences and Similarity**

Part of Hannerz's definition of a genuine cosmopolitanism emphasises the "search for contrasts rather than uniformity". For an individual to be a genuine cosmopolitan, he/she should be able to seek for differences between self and

others, rather than expecting homogeneity and everywhere societies replicating similar behaviour and way of life. By purposively looking for differences, one is able to expose him/herself to cultural others. Although this an important element in cosmopolitan experience, seeking for differences is not the sole source for an individual to equally expose themselves and increase the chances for social interactions and engagements with cultural others. The respondents in this research explained their intentions in seeking for similarity, while at the same time being aware of the marked differences between themselves and those they socially encounter in the UK. Seeing similarities allow them to think beyond their own self to be more inclusive and embracing. Luqman, who is very accepting of differences and who declares himself as an open minded individual who seeks for differences and is willing to be part of other's culture and everyday life, expresses his thoughts of his fellow friends who are confined to own social group while in the UK and unwilling to engage with cultural others (in their case, their British friends). Rather than stereotyping the British and assuming every Briton acts the same as the rest, he seeks for differences to understand them further. His online and offline social interactions with them provide him with a glimpse of their lives and to notice that not everyone is the same, even those coming from the same socio-cultural background. Awareness of these differences allows him to respect these individuals accordingly as he said *"I think meeting people from a different culture does actually tell you quite a lot about how you should (behave)...I don't know for me it doesn't mean that when I say something they are going to be offended...(it's) how you respect them as well. So different people different culture you have to respect"*. The interview extract below illustrates his desire to be different from the rest of the

Malays (he knew) who are unwilling to move away from their circle and who imposed stereotypes on British people.

*Luqman – “We (Luqman and another friend) do mix up with a lot of British. We do have the same thoughts of British people this is how they react, this is what dia punya [their] style (is) and everything but one of the other friends yang tak berapa [does not really] mix up sangat ‘oh no they are just normal people they are just the same’. I don’t know. I think that we are probably a bit more critical because we have (more) experience with them. This guy he can only generalise because he doesn’t have much of interaction. That’s just me I’m not sure. It’s not a fact. It’s just a matter of opinion”.*

Experiences in interacting with the British allow Luqman and his friends to be able to see an individual as an individual, not tied to their British identity. By recognising that the British have their own styles and reactions, showed Luqman and friend’s ability to identify their British contacts as individuals and extend respect to them individually and as a group. At the same time he believes that different cultures need to be equally respected and deserving of equal treatment. Just as differences allow Luqman to appreciate others and understand them further, sameness such as the expectation of each individual and society to be accepted and respected, also provides the basis to accept those different Others. In this case, cosmopolitanism is not necessarily a search for contrast, as Hannerz (1990) states, but also includes the search for uniformity as demonstrated by Lamont and Aksartova (2001) in their research on working class men’s ordinary cosmopolitanism, which focused on their ways of dealing with racism. Acknowledging their similarities, such as being human, they all deserve equal treatment. Luqman is not seeking for universalism in the way

some of Lamont and Aksartova's respondents were (universality of human nature), but more of a grounded sameness – how they experience their everyday life and what matters daily. Luqman's experience is an example of how differences and sameness can be used as a base for respecting others and acknowledging that everyone is equal.

However, these differences can also be a source of isolation, distancing themselves from the cultural others. Another respondent, Abir, who is similar to Luqman in her social outlook and claimed to be an open-minded person, passes judgement and assesses Others based on their everyday online sharing that emphasised the differences between her lifestyle and the Others. According to her, even though she feels comfortable with those people from different cultural backgrounds, she finds herself uninterested in their life because they are different from her lifestyle and what she expects to see on Facebook.

*Abir – “I see the way that they live their life is different than the kinds of photos that we put up and from a degree like it's always party in my honest opinion like the locals (British) especially are always partying, there is nothing much about the current issues that's going on in their country that they put up on Facebook so that give me an insight on their, mentality level. But then I don't, I rarely comment on the Facebook because I'm not close to them so you know I don't feel personally attached to them to make me want to comment further on their photo. It doesn't interest me kot”.*

This not only indicates that differences (and stereotyping other users) are not necessarily amenable accepted by the users but those differences could create a



barrier to further social interactions and acceptance. A form of social filtering that is based on what the respondents find interesting and most importantly acceptable to them. What this points towards is the differences in perceptions individuals have of lifestyles which are so dissimilar to their own. However, these do not make her less cosmopolitan but emphasise the point made throughout this thesis, that extension of openness is contextualised and at times contradictory. Further, this context-based social interaction also emphasises that refusal to directly engage (as mentioned in the previous section) with others is not an indicator of how less cosmopolitan an individual is. It again questions the understanding of cosmopolitanism as willingness to engage (in whatever forms). Abir is the same person who claimed to be open-minded but selectively accepts cultural differences. What do these issues say about the contemporary understanding of cosmopolitanism? What does selective cosmopolitanism, in their experience, attest to? They demonstrate the elusive character of the concept and its contradictions. If cosmopolitanism is about extension of openness without limits, their experiences shared here contest the whole idea of extending openness to cultural others<sup>68</sup>. In what way then do we conceptualise openness? Again I contend, everyone is a potential cosmopolitan and openness is expressed differently by different social actors, to different people, according to different contexts and time. It is imperative for us cosmopolitan researchers to acknowledge the complexities of cultural cosmopolitanism, and that an individual is always presented with dilemmas, contradictions, inclusion and exclusion, ignorance and acceptance. By doing so, it should help us to see that cosmopolitans are everywhere because sensibilities are

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<sup>68</sup> Later section will also highlight a student's limited and selected openness.

already embedded within them, just waiting for the appropriate audience and context for them to be expressed.

### **6.3. Religion as Discursive Resources – Islam as the Way of Life**

The individual experiences of these students create varied (intensity) contextualised cosmopolitan sensibilities and consequently the specific types of cosmopolitan self expressed within their Malay Muslim identities. Religion is used selectively as a discursive resource to accept or reject differences and is important to their cosmopolitan experiences and also to the discussion of cosmopolitanism in general (Iqtidar, 2012). Differences are examined within the context of their Malay Muslim identities, which they negotiated to allow for those differences to be (partially) accepted. It is not easy to accept lifestyle, beliefs and values that are different from what they have and are used to, but some are able to distance themselves from their own prejudices to acknowledge that despite these marked contrasts between them and the Others, similarities can still be found. Being an individual, regardless of background, together with the teaching of Islam that emphasises peace and respect, is used to negotiate these differences. Islam plays two roles in this: one, being a resource to support openness and, two, made as a basis to reject those from one's own group who demonstrate unacceptable Islamic behaviour. Apparently it is easier to accept socio-cultural and religious different Others compared to those from one's own group sharing the same socio-cultural and religions conventions. What we will see in this section are discursive resources being drawn from Islamic teachings and the users' dilemma in extending openness,

whilst at the same time adhering to their religious beliefs. Cosmopolitan sensibilities already exist among this group of students. When extending openness and observing their differences and similarities to negotiate self and other, they dig into their already embedded sensibilities and experiences that shaped their understanding of world's societies and what makes societies and individuals distinct. Religion is used selectively as a discursive resource to accept or reject differences and is important to the students' cosmopolitan experience and also to the discussion of cosmopolitanism in general (Iqtidar, 2012).

In the previous section, I discussed that differences can be a source that brings people together, a unity in diversity, but equally has the potential to separate people further. The experience of Amal (see interview excerpt, page 224) above shows her appreciation for differences and that perception, on its own, becomes a starting point for further engagements. Despite claiming differences as something important, she demonstrated a selective form of acceptance of these socio-cultural differences, highlighting the limits of one's openness to such differences, as also discussed in the previous section. The interview passage below tells of her inability to accept a way of life that is so different from her own. Being partially open to homosexuality does not indicate acceptance of such lifestyle. Partially open in her situation refers to acknowledging that some individuals are homosexual and this acknowledgement comes with respects which are extended to these individuals however she still sees homosexuality as unacceptable. Just as she was able to understand others and accept their differences, she expects others to extend her similar acceptance and understanding. This places her in a position where only

certain differences are accepted, demonstrating the context dependence of openness highlighted throughout this thesis. Cultural differences are accepted easily, while those against their Islamic teachings are found to be disconcerting. Here religion is being used as a source to highlight differences. By comparing self with similar others, such as the Arabs and a pious Christian friend, she was able to justify her apprehension of homosexuality<sup>69</sup>. What we can grasp from her experience is the level and type of tolerance extended to differences and how she justifies an attitude that is narrow and contradicts the earlier openness she extends and her ability to distance herself from her Malay identity when needed to. Her stance on homosexuality is clear, not entirely accepting it but able to respect others' preferences and way of life. In this case cosmopolitanism is not a clear cut acceptance but entails respect extended to others. She is placed in a dilemma in accepting different others and in withdrawing openness and that draws her into a constant battle in being a good Muslim and a bad Muslim. Where does one draw the line between these two? As a Muslim, one is expected to respect others, show compassion and be able to tolerate others as mentioned earlier, thus being a cosmopolitan in terms of opening oneself to differences in what is considered a good character for a Muslim. However, extending openness to those activities is considered unacceptable for a Muslim, seen as betrayal of the religion itself.

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<sup>69</sup> This apprehension of homosexuality is seemingly common among many Malay Muslims. As a Malay Muslim, I also find myself torn between tolerating and rejecting homosexuality. I am aware that as a human being I should extend openness and acceptance but at the same time saying that I accept them seems to indicate myself questioning/rejecting the teaching of Islam in regards to homosexuality. Where one positions oneself in situations such as this cannot be a direct marker of cosmopolitanism; a dilemma which attests to the elusiveness of cosmopolitanism (openness to differences). In the end, the position I took is that I accept homosexuality, try to understand why they engage in such lifestyle but one that I will not engage with.

Extending openness in this case becomes more complex when / if an individual is placed in such situations. Cosmopolitanism is thus not a straight forward experience but is laden with dilemmas, contradictions, inclusions and exclusions. This brings us again to the discussion in the previous section on the limits of openness and whether this can be considered cosmopolitan. Yes, regardless of the subjectivities and persistence of prejudice, this can be considered cosmopolitan due to the flexibilities in the form of respect extended and the realisation that it is impossible to have individuals without their prejudices and those who accept every difference without blinking an eye, as this chapter using the empirical data has illustrated.

*Amal – “It’s like when you say you are open you just accept other people practices those kinds of things that is so foreign in your life. In our country in our life we don’t accept things like that so I mean we are different in terms of culture religion. So many things we have to limit from accepting a particular weird culture lah Gay ke or whatever? For me I don’t have friends who are particularly proposing for that idea but they have such society here (for Gay and Lesbian). It’s an open thing so for me it’s like ok (although) it’s totally unacceptable in my religion not just because I’m not a believer (in homosexuality) but I’m a Muslim. When we make friends with those from Saudi, the Arabs, they also cannot accept such things thus this does not make me the odd one. In fact the locals too not everyone can accept this. This English girl (who Amal knows) is very nice, she doesn’t date, came from religious Christian school. She has different ways of seeing values in life compared to those so called liberal and modern (individuals). Yes we are open to those ideas but I wouldn’t be able to support or say yes or smile to you. I will never. They know you don’t take pork, you don’t drink alcohol. They can accept you, when we can’t accept them they are not that offended. But in my mind I kept asking ‘why are you involved in such unacceptable thing?’” (Some*

*words/sentences are translated to English by the thesis author. Emphasis underlined by thesis author).*

In the case of those activities that do not contradict religious teachings, tolerance is easily given. Individuals do not find themselves in situations that force them to question the right and wrong of their actions. Another respondent uses religion to justify her actions and ‘doing the right thing’, similar to Lamont and Aksartova’s North African working class men who used religion as a basis to do good things; in this respondent’s case a ‘right thing’ was seen in her refraining from thinking stereotypically and accepting others regardless of their race.

*Hafizah – “I cannot, how to say, have a stereotype kind of thinking so when I was teaching them (her students) I remind (myself) that you know your race ke apa benda ke [or whatever] you have to put that aside and even though we are having a different religion right, kita percaya benda benda lain tapi [we believe in different things but the] bottom line is regardless of our religion we believe that we should do good right and then kita ada tuhan kan [we have god]. Tak kisah you percaya apa benda pun kan [Doesn’t really matter what we believe in]”. Give yourself time as well as opportunity to learn about others to understand others as an individual not really say simply generalise them oh they belong to this group or race kan but again because understanding people. You have to look at people individually, as individuals not as a group as individual belongs to a group but as individual itself like and those kind of status you have to put aside lah”*

What these two respondents expressed are two dissimilar ways of negotiating variances in different contexts. In the earlier context, homosexuality is rejected

outright by Islam and being born a Muslim, an observant and one who adheres to the teachings of Islam, Amal finds herself in a dilemma and contradicts the very openness she expressed in other contexts, an issue discussed in the previous section. The context in which Hafizah finds herself is in no way opposite to Islamic teachings rather embedded within – respecting others regardless of their beliefs and ethnicity; therefore this puts her in a situation that is less controversial and does not put her in a dilemma of extending or withholding openness, like Amal. What I have presented here are two different contexts in which Islam is used as a basis to reject and to accept differences. It is in general used by the students as a discursive resource to deal with diversities and otherness, but appropriated rather differently depending on the contexts. Even for Razali (who shares a similar social outlook to Luqman and Abir, as an individual who appreciates meeting strangers and building new relationships) who said *“I always interpret something not because I’m a Malay or I’m a Muslim or whatever I think myself as - this guy like to put this one...is like common view of me without related to my religion or my race”*, his actions and thoughts are at times shaped by his Malay Muslim identity. Razali shared his view on interpreting and commenting on the behaviour of others online and offline:

*“I think I can say about this guy (about his actions) because of themselves not because of my religion. Maybe sometime yes "oh the guy is drunk it's no good", if (I) say about religion. "Oh the guy is too sexy" oh because of my culture, so depends sometimes but you can't change people mind just because of Facebook or just because of religion. It's how people interpret (every action). If that person is too open so they won't say anything but if the people is too closed*

*minded...they can say something (like) that "ah that guy, oh that girl ah" (negative, disapproving expression).*

Sometimes his perceptions are guided by his religion and culture but there are times when his individual self and personality take over in determining his view of others. Being open-minded or narrow-minded, for him, does shape one's views of others' behaviour and actions. What Razali and other respondents' nuanced expressions of openness indicate is the contextual, temporal and individual self-distantiation within one's own ascribed identity. This brings us back to the complexities in categorising cosmopolitans and the argument that it is more useful to accept individuals as being able to be open yet closed and that there could be different level of openness attributed to different dimensions for instance on sartorial preference, sexuality, religion, and politics. Also recognising that an individual could be placed in a situation where he / she wishes to be tolerant but is unable to for many different reasons and could be trying their best to work at being tolerant.

In addition to their already existing religious knowledge and beliefs, the presence of one's own group members – family members, friends, colleagues – online as described in chapter five and the *Usrah*<sup>70</sup> (*offline*) activities they conduct weekly, provide a sort of reinforcement mechanism that acts as a constant reminder of who

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<sup>70</sup> *Usrah* is an Arabic name for Family. This term is used by Malay Malaysians in the UK for a group activity they conduct usually on a weekly basis to educate, remind Malay Muslim Malaysians students of Islamic teachings, share their troubles and worries, to discuss worldly issues and the afterlife. It indirectly reminds them of who they are, the expectations their family and society have of them while being away from home. It is considered a good self-enforcement activity.



they are. The frequency, intensity, and the topics of the meet-up vary from one group to another. A Malay Malaysian community in Durham arranged for a once-a-week *Usrah*, open to anyone who would like to attend. It does not just act as an informal Islamic gathering but also an opportunity to get acquainted with new members (and their family members) who came to Durham. Even if this type of gathering is not realised by some respondents as a type of identity reinforcement activity, they in reality remind them of the presence of their own group members in the country. The physical absence of the whole society is replaced by the presence of a small community offline, whose effects on individual's self and actions are similar to the former, even if they are not of the same magnitude. This activity is replicated elsewhere over the UK, such as those conducted weekly in Cardiff. Some are more formal than others, depending on the information the community wishes to disseminate. Activities such as this see the progression of an individual as a Muslim, as shared by Farid below:

*“So far Alhamdulillah I think I can (be a better Muslim) with the help of my friends around me I can preserve in fact I mean like I can be a better Muslim as compared to when I was in Malaysia. Lot of ways (to do so) one of them is that I got Islamic circle you call Usrah here. You must know about this. This kind of thing...you have good people around you to keep reminding you about stuff you are doing every day and one thing that quite interesting about Usrah is that it is just not a circle that shares knowledge once a week but it is more on looking what progression that you are making as a Muslim especially a Muslim who lives in UK, Ireland, around Europe...they keep monitoring you like how many surah in the Al-Quran you have memorised. How about your Fajr prayer? How about your fasting? If you can (monitor) it every week...you are motivated to do things better in the future”.*

Before coming to the UK, Farid sees himself to be less pious but the Islamic bonding he has had while studying in the UK progressed towards the strengthening of his Muslim self. It is through this type of gathering that he experienced self-discovery and self-transformations. Together with the weekly *Usrah*, the Cardiff community also organised a monthly programme called MABIK – *Malam Bina Iman dan Taqwa* – it is an informal programme that involved Islamic related activities. A more formal Islamic gathering is usually conducted annually for instance the *Jalanan Ukhuwah Muslimin Sejuk (JUMS)* Farid is participating in. It is a programme under *Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (ISMA) Eropah*, an NGO that organises various Islamic human resource development programmes, communities and charitable activities. The general mission of this ISMA, which is based in many other countries such as New Zealand, Egypt and in a number of Malaysian states (to name a few), is to nurture the strength of the individual's Islamic self (Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia, 2012). *JUMS'* is viewed as a starting point to improve individual's self and personality. It is through this type of gathering that Malay Muslim Malaysians abroad can develop further as a Muslim individual. Given the importance of the mobile youth to the country's development, *JUMS* is one of those activities believed to be able to fortify their Malay Muslim identity, while pursuing academic excellence overseas. Similarly, these types of Islamic activities are also organised for Malay Muslim woman in the UK. A group of female students also found themselves experiencing the strengthening of their Muslim identity with varying degrees and some are "living the revived spiritualism of the Islamic resurgence at a very intense level, with many stressing the absolute centrality of Islam in their lives" (Stivens, 1998: 114).

Such activities, even with the emphasis placed on strengthening their ascribed identity particularly their identity as a Muslim, do not make them insular. As discussed previously, Islam is used as a resource to accept (and to some extent reject) cultural differences. The *ukhuwah* (brotherhood or sisterhood) they build from Islamic gatherings such as *Usrah* rests upon Islamic theology, faith and piety that creates and supports compassion, love, and deep respect for the individual. It is expected to give birth to a sense of deep affection in the soul of every Muslim and bring about positive social behaviour, such as helping each other, giving priority to others, being friendly, and forgiving. It helps to avoid actions that can bring harm to others, whether in relation to life, property, honour, or the things that destroy their dignity<sup>71</sup>. These features are rarely mentioned in cosmopolitanism studies that generally conceptualise cosmopolitanism as ‘openness to cultural differences’. The deep affection of a Muslim individual could become a strong base to cultural openness and acceptance forming their specific form of rooted Muslim cosmopolitanism. A rooted cosmopolitanism experience that is beyond that of Kwame Appiah’s conceptualisation of a cosmopolitan – an individual who is “attached to a home of his or her own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different, places that are home to other, different, people” to include a deeper sense of compassion from religious beliefs and knowledge and openness that are embedded within and practiced every day, according to the contexts creating this specific Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism – a form of cosmopolitanism that is not exactly in conflict with

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<sup>71</sup> The exact definition of *Ukhuwah* could vary from one person to another. The description of *Ukhuwah* I provided here is a generally acceptable one. Source: Tabayyun.wordpress.com

the notion of openness that the (earlier) general and other forms of cosmopolitanism advocated. A form of cosmopolitanism that offers a grounded understanding of actually existing cosmopolitanism in their contexts. Prejudices, subjectivities, selective openness and using bounded social identity to extend openness, tolerance and flexibilities to others, seemingly contrasts with the very idea of what (liberal) cosmopolitanism is but, as argued by many scholars (such as Craig Calhoun, Ulrich Beck, and Kwame Appiah), no one lives simply as an individual without any attachments to a place or community. Therefore, their existing attachments and possibly newly formed attachments are shaping them creating the multiple contexts, which become they resources or backdrop for social interactions and engagements.

#### **6.4. Online and Offline Experiences – Not everything is from Facebook**

Facebook is a space holding massive potentialities in connecting people from different walks of life. Allowing banal everyday activities to be shared and consumed by other users can provide a pool of resources for users to draw from, to witness and to experience differences and sameness; therefore, it can create many possibilities in cultivating cosmopolitan consciousness and the pool of discursive resources for users. However, as I have explained in previous chapters, these students' Facebook friends are those they know offline and the majority are Malay Muslim, this situation thus creates a filter 'cultural' bubble that would restrict the

types of information they received on their news feed to specific contexts and interests and that are limited to those from their own group. As Zuckerman (2013: 58) aptly writes “(w)e pay attention to what we care about and, especially, to persons we care about. Information may flow globally, but our attention tends to be highly local and highly tribal; we care more deeply about those with whom we share a group identity and much less about a distant ‘other’”. I examined if this socio-cultural filter bubble has become an obstacle to cultivation of cosmopolitan consciousness. In a situation such as this, some of these respondents could have been labelled insular rather than cosmopolitan. However, the number of friends from one’s own ethnic group, regardless of the socio-culturally bounded information received, cannot reduce these students to an insular or un-cosmopolitan individual; rather I observed a specific form of cosmopolitanising experiences which are particular to these individuals. Although the information that is *pushed* to their news feed are predominantly Malay Muslim Malaysian context, majority of the students interviewed experienced what can be considered as cosmopolitan consciousness through their self-reflexivity, self-distantiation, and purposively seeking differences and similarity from cultural others both offline and online. The discursive resources they draw upon are not restricted to Facebook engagements but are also drawn from offline engagements such as previous encounters with cultural others at their workplace, their (Chinese or Indian) neighbours or schoolmates. Illustrating the point made by Waldron (2000: 231) that even by staying at particular place could still provide an individual with “a diversity of culture, a diversity of human practices and experiences”. The resources they use to understand and appreciate their differences with others come from

Islamic teaching (being a good Muslim), the obvious differences between them and cultural others, as well as their similarities such as being a human being, an individual with his / her own rights, and preconceived notions of how others behave and their lifestyles.

We know of the promising connectivity Facebook offers, a site that allows users to transcend their own locality, and network to explore other people, and places represented online as Facebook Profile and Facebook Pages. Facebook offers an open network suggesting vast potential of multiple interactions that transcend nationalities and locations and this very affordance make it a powerful site for the development of cosmopolitan sensibilities. Nevertheless, we are seeing bounded social interactions on the site and we have seen personalised use of the site, within 'own contexts' as discussed in the previous section, and in chapter five, that illustrates the nuances of Facebook use, experiences, interactions, engagements and motivation in signing up for an account, and over time their motivation for using the site still. How far they have reached virtually on Facebook is pertinent to this analysis on cultivation of cosmopolitan sensibilities. I have argued for the importance in searching for these students' motives to seek for information and materials beyond their immediate network and their motivation to engage with these materials to understand cosmopolitan sensibilities. These students' motivations for using Facebook include keeping in touch with families and friends back in Malaysia, keeping themselves up to date with Friends' lives, shopping, academic and professional purposes, and as an events reminder/coordinator to name a few. Rarely did they mention the reason for using Facebook is to seek for

information beyond their own network, except for a number of respondents who find Facebook particularly useful for their “information-seeking” activity. For example, Abir’s Facebook network is quite large, consisting of people from different cultural backgrounds who she met offline while in Malaysia and in the UK. Their friends’ updates (not necessarily outside their network and interests) provided a wide range of information that they might not initially be interested in but eventually led them to search further. Facebook updates of friends that appear on their news feeds become the means to gather potential topics of conversation. Friends personal sharing provides enough information for the respondents to find topics to talk about when they meet offline. This simple use of Facebook to find topics of conversation seems insignificant but it does suggest the interest in (or accidentally) finding out about others and highlights the potential of Facebook in bringing a user into the lives of others, just like one student said on how Facebook provide the means to experience what it is like *‘to be in their shoes’*.

Due to the varieties of features Facebook offers virtual reach on the site can also be assessed through features such as Pages. Pages are made for business, organisations and brands to share and connect with everyone; it has been used for a lot of other purposes such as community building (including cultural and religious ones), inspirations, academic, and individuals’ Fan Pages to name a few. Even though an individual’s network is ethnically dominated and their engagements with others are minimal, Pages can be a source of information and provide users with a glimpse of others’ lifestyles, beliefs, behaviours and worldviews. A number of respondents commented that Pages does help them to understand others but

there are many that do not find Pages useful for them to explore the diversity and richness of world societies. I suspect this is due to their narrow and limited virtual reach. Having more than a million Facebook Pages online (Socialbakers, 2012) does not make it any easier for users to find and *Like* them. This again depends on users' interests and ability to search for the Page or possibly having the luck to stumble upon them while lurking on other users' profiles or through other users' updates that appear on their news feed. This confirms the importance of motivation for socio-cultural and religious searching and learning in cosmopolitanism analysis<sup>72</sup>. Cosmopolitanism can develop out of accidental exposure and engagements or from an individual's desire to seek beyond what they know and who they are.

Nora, a new user who signed up for a profile three months before the interview, talked about her lack of interest in seeking beyond her network. This is reflected in her minimal use of the site and her opinion on how Facebook should be used, quoting her, *"I don't believe everything has to be public" and "too burdensome for the system"* to be sharing emotionally laden information (status updates). Because of her attitude towards Facebook and her very recent engagement with it, the site's potential has not been realised. Facebook, in her case, does not help in creating openness in some ways because of her limited use of the site and that she does not use it to seek information of others: *"I think because I don't do...I only disclose as much as I see it fits to disclose so when I read things that are not necessary for me*

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<sup>72</sup> Lampe, Ellison and Steinfield (2006) use the term "social searching" to refer to action of users to investigate their friends with whom they are also connected online and "social browsing" to find users or groups online who they would want to connect with offline.



*to know I just like "I don't need to read this". I just skimmed through and think which I need to read. A friend of my friends' story, I don't really like go into deep but then close friend yeah".*

Despite the fact that Facebook does not help her in understanding those from different cultural backgrounds, it did not make her less open as her offline encounters and experiences with Chinese and Indians from Malaysia when she worked in a local bank, and with locals and international students in the UK, had helped her to be more receptive and open-minded. Her openness, tolerance and flexibilities are developed within specific contexts, for instance her professional working environment and student-student relationships. Being placed in situations that persuaded her to act appropriately and respecting others has, over time, developed an acceptance of differences and an acknowledgement of different personalities and perspectives. This again demonstrates a strategic form of cosmopolitanism that became embedded into the individual; openness towards cultural others that remained within and this very feeling extended to those new people she encountered, knowing that it is important to be an open individual, withholding judgments although it is always easy to fall into prejudices. Nora's experience with offline social encounters resulting in acceptance of differences, and extending openness to others, is similar to the experiences of many respondents interviewed, whose offline and online social encounters have exposed them to different others. In both the pilot and main study (interview), when we talked about exposure to others from different backgrounds with different perspectives, the respondents always relate back to past offline experiences, indicating that despite

Facebook affordances, actual face to face interactions (and preconceived ideas of others) are important in the cultivation of cosmopolitan consciousness, which is also brought online when they bring *themselves* into Facebook. For example a respondent who finds himself always accommodating others, ensuring that they would not be offended by his actions; to prevent this he cannot act the same way with everyone and this behavior is brought onto Facebook: *"I'm a private (person), I am. Somehow I get to know a lot of different kind of people from my life and I find it a bit hard to just be one type of personality with everyone. For me I don't want to offend people if I just react the same way with everyone. I have a friend who feels like she can do anything and if other people are not happy about it, it is their problem. I cannot do that. That is my problem"*. It is always about showing and acting different selves to different people and this is one of the attributes of a cosmopolitan – flexibilities, which he sees as a problem not as a positive attribute. Accommodating others could be his personality (giving in) or it could also be caused by the pressure to suit others' expectations. Whichever it is caused by, being flexible to people and situations can be seen in a positive light, as it suggests that he already has an attribute of a cosmopolitan that is developed out of offline social engagements and also brought onto Facebook.

Living in a multicultural (cosmopolitan) city also provides the opportunity to develop cosmopolitan consciousness. Similar to Nora, whose face to face engagements with Malaysian others, while working in a local bank, helped her understand others better and appreciate their differences and similarity, for

another student being in London allowed him to engage with people from different backgrounds. Below is an extract of the interview I conducted with Mohamad.

MM - How about you being in the UK? Does that help since London is like a multicultural cosmopolitan city?

Mohamad - Yeah I think that little bit has umm I don't know enhance that side of me I mean I'm working as a service crew so I deal a lot with people from different nationalities, from different religions yeah I think since I become a waiter I talked a lot to different people, more than I would have.

MM - How about living in London? Does that help as well when you meet people on your way to school say on the tube?

Mohamad - Yeah yeah definitely because previously I lived in a student hall, it's a private student hall so umm all my neighbours are from Spain, from Bulgaria, top floor is from Ireland so yeah. Once there was a blackout in our building everyone has to go down so it was like a multicultural party there people just started to (chat)...you never really actually met each other because you are busy with school and then when the building had a blackout and everybody start seeing each other.

MM - oh alright. I'm trying to think through this actually umm is it possible to link you know your bubbly personality and openness to different races umm to being in London. Would it be different if you were studying here (in the North) instead of London?

Mohamad - I see, I would probably think so (pause) but I think since I came to London but I think London would have enhance more I suppose because you know Londoners. I'm not saying Londoners lah umm I'm saying the European are more outspoken, in a way you have to be outspoken as well. You know like they say 'when you are in Rome do as the Romans do' so when you are in London do as Londoners lah.

Accidental or situational encounters such as black out in a university hall and waiting can create situations that could help in developing cosmopolitan consciousness. For Mohamad these situations helped him to engage with diverse groups of people in different contexts (as a service provider and a fellow student) and it is also because of his cheerful personality, his open-mindedness and feeling comfortable engaging with strangers that he can create positive engagements out of these encounters. Some people being placed in the same situation might not enjoy the same experience. Being on Facebook also does not automatically create favourable cosmopolitan encounters. For instance Hafizah (also quoted in chapter five) who did not find emotional support she needed from Facebook (or other online sites) at the time of her father's death, became sceptical of the potential of social network sites in developing further social interactions/relationships. Consequently, she does not see the potential of Facebook in extending openness. She did not say anything about the site's virtual reach but emphasised that the site cannot provide interactions as deep as those offline. To temporarily detach self from the identities carried along, takes time and it is only through face to face offline interactions that this could be possible. Her bad experiences online influenced her view of Facebook and shaped her interactions on the site.

*Hafizah – “Hmm I do not know to certain extent but again to reach the level whereby you can really amm how to say to certain extent ignore the differences among yourself with others right rather than focus on the common thing to reach that level might takes time. (T)hen to certain extent you know particular person really well in which that you can you know umm decrease or forget about the differences and focus on the similarities and which is different from one people to another and to certain*

*extent that challenge you to...because when we are interacting with others right we carry all these kind of identities and we are very conscious on how to portray ourselves to these kind of people. (T)o reach the level where by we don't, we can be ourselves and we don't really care or consciously care about how we should portray ourselves to others really takes time and then Facebook to certain extent I don't think is a good mean to do that because I do believe in face to face interaction".*

Sabrina, a postgraduate student who is a long-term user of Facebook, disclosed her hesitancy in using the site daily/frequently. For her offline experiences are more rewarding than online engagements. She has spent some time in the United States and admitted that her presence and experience while being in the States helped make her more open to differences. Offline experiences, such as the place one lived in and the school one went to, play a role in making an individual more receptive to cultural others and their differences. Abir, as I had described earlier and in chapter five, considered herself to be open to cultural others, feels comfortable meeting new people but is still selective in extending openness and has limited levels of tolerance, talked about her experiences living in a Chinese neighbourhood (Georgetown, Penang) in Malaysia and attending a multiracial school. Her offline experiences with cultural others have helped develop her open personality to some extent. As she said *"It goes back to your upbringing jugak [too], if you went to boarding schools that has all Malays for five years, it would be hard for you to enter the Chinese group and Indian groups because the way that you (think), your language would be different, your body language would be different as well but*

*then I went to a uni race (multiracial) school. You won't find difficulty in mingling with one another. The journey (education) takes me to different groups"*<sup>73</sup>.

Online sites and spaces such as Facebook, due to the affordances they have such as their virtual reach, searchability, persistence of data, the multimodal interactions, and the mundane everyday sharing, could possibly offer more chances of cosmopolitan consciousness compared to offline experiences that are rather spatially bound; however, what has been presented and discussed in this chapter indicate that both online and offline are useful for cultivating cosmopolitan consciousness. While some respondents find online interactions and engagements to be rewarding, some others find offline experiences and interactions to be more rewarding. Their experiences depend on their initial reasons for using the site and their individual experiences online. It is imperative for researchers to acknowledge the significant contribution online interactions could generate and their potential for cosmopolitanism.

## **6.5. Summary**

This chapter has engaged us in rethinking cosmopolitanism through the experiences of the Malay Malaysian student respondents in the United Kingdom framed within the discussion of what I call Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism; a specific form of cosmopolitanism experienced by the students rooted in their Malay Muslim

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<sup>73</sup> This link to education for cultural openness highlights the significance (and potential) of education (non-academic) in providing the platform for cosmopolitan engagements.

identity. Cosmopolitanism in their experience is not simply an extension of openness but is embedded in their daily lives and used to navigate their absence from home (Malaysia), their presence in the UK and their online presence where different contexts co-exist, resulting in a complex interplay of social interaction between self and others from other cultural groups and one's own group. This cosmopolitan openness becomes a strategy, a life project, sometimes cultivated accidentally and sometimes a willing act by the students. The cosmopolitan conditions are created from a complex interplay of self, other, and online/offline presence and absence, during that period of time as international students in the UK, and also from their past experiences. Their future cosmopolitan experiences might be shaped differently when placed in different contexts, for example when they are back in Malaysia after completing their studies. Discursive resources, such as religious teachings, may vary as knowledge and understanding of Islam as a way of life evolves. One example is in the (re)interpretation of Quranic verses as they are adapted to the contemporary social life which could become discursive resources for the individuals.

This thesis places a great deal of importance on the voices of the individuals, their own expression of what openness is to them; hence this second empirical chapter draws largely from my data. The interviews revealed what cosmopolitan sensibilities were cultivated on Facebook, what the respondents' meant by openness, what they are open to and the fluidity of their expression of openness itself. This chapter has presented and discussed the cultivation of cosmopolitan sensibilities on Facebook, the limited discursive resources they draw from, the pool

of information on the site and offline experiences, and has also shown their contextualised 'openness to others' experiences. Despite the global reach of Facebook, the students' virtual reach is not extensive. Being away from home and their online presence does not take them out of their cultural and religious contexts but is placed in similar contexts online, due to the presence of their family members, friends, acquaintances and colleagues from Malaysia. Cosmopolitan sensibilities cultivated out of, and expressed during, social encounters on Facebook are negotiated within this dominant context, their 'given' identity and the identity of others. Rather than resulting in an insular individual, this home away from home context, and the strengthening of the Malay Muslim identity online and offline while in the UK, created a specific form of cosmopolitan experiences – a rooted Muslim cosmopolitanism. They saw themselves searching for both differences and sameness to be used as a resource to extend openness in contrast to Hannerz's (1990) understanding of cosmopolitanism as the "search for contrasts rather than uniformity". Islamic teachings are used as resources that inform decisions to accept or reject cultural others. While a respondent uses Islamic teachings to support her social actions and acceptance of cultural others, another one uses them to reject homosexuality but admits to being able to respect those engaged in homosexual activities. What this shows is the nuance of cosmopolitan sensibilities among individuals and having the least cosmopolitan attributes, such as outright rejection of specific differences in lifestyles, does not make an individual un-cosmopolitan; rather the nuanced openness to cultural differences exhibits individualised and contextualised experiences of cosmopolitanism. Each of these respondents is capable of being a cosmopolitan and the experiences shared during the interviews



showed that they are cosmopolitans in their own right. It cannot be denied that there are individuals that are more cosmopolitan than others but labelling one as un-cosmopolitan is impractical, considering the temporal and contextual aspects of openness, tolerance and flexibilities: “what is important is not whether cosmopolitanism exists as an abstraction but rather when, under which conditions and on the basis of what factors (gender, class, religion, and so on) cosmopolitanism exists or ceases to exist” (Roudemetof, 2012: 117). Through a narrow local lens, these students’ cosmopolitan practices and experiences differ markedly from the Malays analysed by Souchou Yao (2003), Terence Chong (2005) and Joel Kahn (2006, 2008). My respondents’ cosmopolitanism is a result of their temporary overseas stay, absence from home, and the selective use of religious teachings as discursive resources, thereby producing a specific form of a rooted Muslim cosmopolitanism that matters in their everyday life. In a broader scope (cosmopolitanism discourse), their experiences provide another angle to the understanding of the concept and of the actors. Not only does cosmopolitanism have its temporal and contextual aspects that provide its diverse characters, the discursive resources individuals use to extend openness also vary and are acquired from their everyday (past) experiences. In other words, their cosmopolitan practice is one from *below* (Kurasawa, 2004).

This chapter has discussed the respondents’ cosmopolitan sensibilities by bringing to stage front the specifics of their cosmopolitan openness within their own contexts; what remains to be explored is the performances of these cosmopolitan sensibilities on Facebook. This thesis recognises the difference between

cosmopolitan sensibilities that refer to thoughts and feelings and performances of cosmopolitanism as sensibilities expressed (actions) by social actors, and that sensibilities are not automatically performed but are variably deployed and performed, according to the motivation of the individual, and the contexts and circumstances individuals are in. Cosmopolitan consciousness is not visible to others and remains in one's thoughts; thus those openness, flexibilities and tolerances that contradict the expectations of those from the dominant contexts they are in, and their negotiation of one's own beliefs, are not available to others to contest. However, the actual performances of their openness can be easily accessed on Facebook and contested. As chapter five has shown, those expressions of self that are seemingly in conflict with the expectations of their cultural group are contested and in many cases the social actors are reprimanded. The issue of what and how cosmopolitan sensibilities are performed on Facebook is explored in the next empirical chapter to elucidate the contexts, circumstances, motivations and frames of interpretation that shape the interviewees' performance of cosmopolitanism.

# Chapter Seven

## Strategic Performance of Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism

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### 7.1. Introduction

Chapter six has discussed the complexities in defining what openness to cultural differences means and the problems associated with labelling an individual as a cosmopolitan or un-cosmopolitan (parochial) through the discussion of individuals' experiences, contexts and situations, and what I called Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism is an elusive concept that cannot be abstractly defined. However, it is possible a definition may be achieved through a detailed analysis of an individual's motivation to become an open person (not necessarily cosmopolitan), an individual's offline and online experiences that have led to cultivation of openness, the information available to them that becomes their pool of resources to draw from and what they see as significant in negotiating their everyday life. For those students their Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism and their cosmopolitan sensibilities are a result of their everyday social interactions and engagements with cultural others while in the UK and also when they were still in Malaysia. Their cosmopolitan sensibilities are also not entirely an after effect of online engagements and interactions alone, but develops from offline face to face interactions and experiences with one's own group and cultural others in the UK and at home. The varied openness to differences discussed in previous chapters, and the varieties of discursive resources they draw from, emphasised the fact that

there is no single experience of cosmopolitanism. An individual negotiates and mentally extends openness according to his or her own situations and contexts.

Picking up from the discussion on cosmopolitan sensibilities in the previous chapter that are contextualised, individualised, temporalised and strategically expressed, this chapter aims to discuss the complexities involved in performing this cosmopolitan openness and to highlight that sensibilities, the extension of openness to cultural others are not always performed. However, when they are performed on Facebook, they vary and the site's infrastructures and properties themselves can be a constraint to and affordances for effective performances of cosmopolitanism. The site's affordances, such as the persistence of data, adds to the complexities of one's presentation of self. The co-presence of different social actors from different groups (family, friends, acquaintances, and colleagues) creates collapsed contexts that make sharing more complex online than offline. Presentation of self in offline space, as theorised by Erving Goffman, is conducted within a specific context, with specific social actors, and the interactions are a two-way process that involves the passing of verbal and non-verbal cues between those actors. In such a situation offline, performance given is understood (and interpreted) within this bounded context and time frame. However, in online space, an earlier performance with a specific group of users within a specific context becomes available to other users (the unintended audience) resulting in remnants or trails of performances that are out of context and can be interpreted in various ways by others. Furthermore, the verbal and non-verbal cues are performed (given/given off) differently online through written text, audios, images, videos and

other ways of communicating. These conditions transform how performance of self is purposively enacted online; an issue which will be discussed later.

As written in chapter three of this thesis, the performance of cosmopolitanism has not been studied intensively within academia; those studies that did focus on offline performances attribute performance to activities such as sociabilities (Glick Schiller, 2009) and sartorial performance (Molz, 2006; Tarlo, 2007). Notwithstanding their contributions, such studies rarely separate sensibilities from actual performance of openness, and online cosmopolitan performances, especially in cosmopolitanism studies, remain a less explored area. Performance of openness in this research is assessed in the form of presentation of self in social interactions and exhibition of identity sharing information, as focusing on these forms of self presentation allow the contexts of individual actions and behaviour on the site to be further understood. Facebook is not only an avenue for maintaining long- and short-distance relationships, communicating with friends or strangers, organising social activities, and gathering of social information but it also provides a platform for an individual to seek, explore, and express, to a certain extent, his or her inner self. A site, due to its features, allows self to be presented in many ways; for instance by sharing photos, articles of interests and Likes. A profile can become one's face in a sense that it represents the embodied user who came onto Facebook with his or her own experiences, subjectivities, identities, hence over time creating a profile signalling his or her identity (Stern, 2008). Users self-presentation is not without dilemmas, negotiation, inclusion and exclusion; what a user discloses and censors make up the 'face' on the site, in which performance of

openness is studied, although it is recognised that not every self-presentation is about expressing openness and not all cosmopolitan sensibilities are performed, as we will see in this chapter. The dominant socio-cultural and religious context elaborated and discussed in chapters five and six has become an important context that guides one's online behaviour and shapes users' expressions of openness. The presence of the visible and invisible (hidden) audience acts as a reminder that there is always someone watching the user's every move, waiting for them to make mistakes (or not) and to reprimand them for deviating from norms. As a result, actions on Facebook are always negotiated with the invisible audience in mind, as well as the actual/intended audience such as family members and close friends. These audiences shape expressions of openness when performed online.

As I have argued in chapter three, sensibilities on their own differ from one person to another and that one's cosmopolitan sensibilities might not be performed which suggests the complexities of singling out one form of cosmopolitan performance and assuming that openness to cultural differences is expressed in similar ways. As Kendall et al., (2009) posit, cosmopolitanism is "(a) cultural repertoire performed by individuals to deal with objects, experiences and people and which is encouraged by particular contexts, fusion of circumstance and motive, and frames of interpretation" which highlights the performative (contextual and temporal) aspects of this highly elusive concept and the dynamics of cosmopolitan performance that depend upon the individuals themselves and the situations they are in. Motive is significant in this; what motivates a user to create a profile, to act in certain ways and not others, and why they wish to present selves as 'open', are

important to comprehend. The reasoning behind one's actions cannot be offered by observation of online behaviour alone. Those Facebook activities are the outcome of a negotiation after thoughts, strategic self-disclosure and self-censorship, and strategic use of the features and settings. Thus this chapter aims to tease out those matters relevant to their presentation of self such as privacy issues, which is a matter of interest to a group of scholars -- such as Gross and Acquisti, (2006); Ellison et al., (2011) and Vitak et al., (2012) -- who saw the significance of privacy issues in shaping online self-disclosure. The individual's own perspective of online and offline privacy, what matters to them and to whom specific information are best shared are shaping their self-disclosure. Particular to this thesis' interest is the influence of privacy issues on their eventual performance of openness on Facebook. Further to the aforementioned interest on privacy issues, when cosmopolitanism is performed, how it is performed, why it is performed and to whom will be discussed in this chapter. Answering these questions addresses the significance of contexts and grounded cosmopolitanism relevant to this research and our understanding of rooted Muslim cosmopolitanism. By referring back to their cosmopolitan sensibilities that are seen as a strategy (among others) deployed in certain situations as discussed in chapter six, this chapter aims to explore their actual strategic performances and the processes involved behind their actions.

## **7.2. Performing Cosmopolitan Sensibilities**

### **7.2.1. A Strategy**

I recall what a respondent said during his interview “*when you are in Rome do as the Romans do so when you are in London do as Londoners lah*” that epitomises an individual’s flexibilities with one’s self to act according to the contexts one is in. ‘When in London act like Londoners’ refers to one taking in the cultural norms of a place and its societies and physically expressing them. Fitting in becomes important to some of the respondents, not only in offline spaces but also on Facebook, where they have local and international students as Facebook friends. This acting like others to fit in and to be accepted begs the question of whether these purposive physical flexibilities are an act for one’s benefit or actual sensibilities felt, extended and performed. Could it be an act they had to perform to be accepted and not actually openness to others that is deeply embedded with them? If we recall the discussion in chapter six on cosmopolitanism as strategy, this thesis contends that despite openness and acceptance seemingly used as a strategy to navigate their everyday life (online and offline) while in the UK, the student respondents’ strategic actions are quintessentially expressions of cosmopolitanism. These are due to the fact that they consciously mentally and physically detach themselves from own socio-cultural and religious norms to absorb Other’s however minuscule they may be. The search for differences by Luqman and other respondents allows them to not only learn about other people but also learn about themselves, their identity



and eventually negotiating and to some extent detaching self from the ascribed identities, Malay Muslim, to embrace others’.

Recalling the experience of Luqman, briefly mentioned in chapter six, he is able to detach himself from his own ascribed identity – that is Malay Muslim, when he needed to in order to try to understand others from where they stand. For him, these flexibilities, with own self, are not in any way problematic as compared to his performance of openness online. In his case, being away from home and living in another country with different cultures, he finds it imperative to present himself as an “open” person (offline and online). Open here refers to an individual (seemingly) detached from religious and socio-cultural identities. He wishes to be known as an *individual* not as a Muslim mainly because of the negativity attached to being a Muslim and its conflation with terrorism. His presentation of self as “open” to his non Malay Muslim Facebook network has been made complex, due to the presence of families, friends, and colleagues from the same socio-cultural and religious backgrounds who have specific expectations of how he should behave online and offline.

In the offline space, Luqman considers presenting himself as an open individual, as a strategy to navigate his everyday life in the UK through his sartorial preference performance, for instance purposely not wearing Malay Muslim clothing such as *Baju Melayu* (traditional Malay attire men wear during special occasions such as Eid and can also be worn everyday); instead he opted for casual jeans and shirt for everyday and western-style suits for formal events. *Baju Melayu* is only worn to

events such as Eid Celebration. This offline behaviour is replicated on Facebook where one refrains from sharing information or uploading photos that make his Muslim identity noticeable. As he said *“I should be proud of who I am being Muslim but even to some British friend I tend to not share much about like even like Hari Raya (Eid) celebration. I would restrict to some of my UK friends, some UK friends that I feel like they would be comfortable about it but some people I won’t. Well I’m not that close with them so why create much more gap in between”*. Not wanting to create more gaps than there already are, and assuming that cultural others would not be able to accept him for being a Muslim, led to his strategic performance of self that emphasises an open individual not tied down by his religion. In his Malay Muslim community, expressing piousness is not expected and as long as one does not show oneself to be a “bad Muslim” one is generally left uncontested. A ‘bad Muslim’ in the context of this current research refers to those who generally appear to have detached themselves from their religion and its teachings such as engaging in *immoral* activities, and drinking alcoholic drinks (and publishing photographs of doing so online).

Knowing their differences and expectations, allowed Luqman and some other respondents to negotiate their performance of openness. Being an experienced Facebook user and with knowledge of the available settings provide these students with the skills to successfully present an open self to those they wish to. Luqman intentionally censors identity sharing information that reflects his Muslim identity and social interactions (in the forms of status updates, links to article and replies to comments) on Islam to be able to straddle between two different (or even multiple)

contexts and expectations that come with them. While censoring Islamic related materials that would confirm his Muslim identity, he ensures that he does not appear a 'bad Muslim' among his members. As elaborated in earlier chapters, presenting self as pious is not expected but appearing bad or explicitly expressing deviant behaviour is scorned.

Being a Malay and a Muslim brought with it specific expectations that such individuals are expected to adhere to. There are socio-cultural rules to how an individual should present themselves, and act both offline and online. Those found to be behaving differently from the expectations are scorned and are usually reprimanded by family members and in some cases close friends, who find themselves obligated to ask the individual why they are deviating from the expected socio-cultural and religious behaviour. Obligation to remind others of good behaviour and reprimanding them for wrong doing is one of the doctrines in Islam "Enjoining Good, Forbidding Wrong"<sup>74</sup> which is seen as an obligation of every Muslim towards other Muslims. These socio-cultural religious norms, and being policed by members from own group, restrict one's behaviour. This view on the expectations of one's own group and the restrictions imposed (which have found their way online too) are understood by the members, as one respondent shared:

*Luqman - I find that at least in Malay culture, not Malaysian culture, Malay culture, we have a certain way of this is what you got to do, this is how you got to act. Well it is something that*

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<sup>74</sup> This doctrine itself is also used to justify one's need to accept others, however different they are. Accepting others, withholding judgments, are seen as positive values which are expected of every Muslim.

*sometimes its religious stuff which I think is ok but sometimes cultural stuff that you have to get married at a certain age and they are not satisfied with everything. You have to have kids and all. It is a bit depressing.*

Such situations force them to act accordingly and strategically. What does this *acting strategically*, and performing cosmopolitan self everyday, say about openness in general and cosmopolitanism? The respondents' strategic actions question what openness and cosmopolitanism are really about. One, is openness an anti-thesis of religion and two, can cosmopolitanism really be about strategy and not simply about an individual cultural consciousness and acceptance? Religion (Islam in this case) is not against openness as it supports compassion, love, and deep respect for the individual but there are specific matters that are considered to be against the religious teachings, hence resulting to some individual's inability to accept and tolerate them. Openness, as emphasised repetitively in this thesis, can never be the same between individuals and how individuals extend their openness varies greatly; as chapter six has demonstrated using the experiences of a number of respondents. Individuals' own interpretations of the situations, using religious teachings as their resources, formed their specific cosmopolitan openness.

Cosmopolitanism is commonly understood as an individual's sole experience with others; however, cosmopolitan experiences and the expressions these students demonstrated are not individual decisions and reflections but involve their social group, whose interactions (and also expectations) create the social contexts they are in. Cosmopolitanism is also a negotiation process with self and others, laden

with dilemma. We cannot then conceptualise the term in a linear way, such as providing a straight-forward definition of the term, without considering those contexts and situations individuals found themselves in. The contexts they are in created the strategic form of cosmopolitanism. While it is generally accepted as individual consciousness, intentions and willingness to engage with cultural others, cosmopolitanism can also be a strategy. This knowledge is significant in our attempt to (re)conceptualise cosmopolitanism or to obtain varied cosmopolitan experiences. It should provide us with a more grounded experience and add to our knowledge of what rooted everyday cosmopolitanism is and the contexts in which, these everyday cosmopolitanism are expressed or refrained.

On another relevant note, as discussed in chapter five, on exploring and presenting self on Facebook, each of the respondents is involved in some forms of impression management, presenting an acceptable self to their audiences and so they resort to different types of strategies to ensure successful presentation of self. Those respondents who portray themselves as progressive Muslim/Muslimah resort to careful self-disclosure and self-censorship, and for some who are familiar with the settings and features, they take advantage of the site's affordances to assist them. Nevertheless, within these self-presentations not all are performances of "open" self. Only a number claimed to present aspects of self that are universally accepted online, such as Luqman's strategic performance described earlier and Razali's experiences, which are about to be discussed.

Razali considers himself to be an open individual, willing to engage with cultural others (including strangers) offline and see social engagements as strategy (similar to Luqman). When his course mates extended an invitation to go to a club or a pub he finds it important to accept their invitations *“if I reject they won’t ask me again so it’s like you know it’s like they...people here their culture once you reject you (have) broken everything”*. By accepting such invitations he positively gives the impression of an out-going social person. Similar to Luqman, those offline activities that are not in line with the expectations of his group are not shared (uploaded) on his Profile but neither does he portray a Muslim self online. By purposely excluding non-Islamic activities and not presenting himself as pious Muslim he is able to avoid the extreme expectations from his own group. As explained earlier, appearing pious is not expected but when one does present one’s self as pious, he has to carry the consequences of future actions that might seem to be non-Islamic.

Despite the similarities Luqman and Razali share, Razali does not utilise the settings to organise his activities but uses mental self-disclosure and self-censorship. Their actions described here exemplify the performance of openness as a strategy. A purposive act of setting aside their own cultural and religious identities when required and to be able to blend in, fit in with those from different backgrounds. And also the strategic use of different forms of self-disclosure and self-censorship to achieve their goals, which support the earlier points made on cosmopolitanism being a strategy not solely about willingness to engage for the purpose of experiencing cultures of others and being an open individual.

Apart from the expectations and home contexts they found themselves in, it is observed that knowledge of Islam nowadays is not restricted to Al-Quran and other Islamic printed articles, or in the case of the respondents' social grooming that is carried with them when they travel to the UK, but has been brought "into the forums of popular culture and making it available via a wide variety of media. Television, the Internet and 'secular' literature now suddenly become sources of Islamic knowledge" (Mandaville, 2003: 136) and social network sites such as Facebook have also become the conduit for sharing Islamic knowledge. Islam has been brought onto Facebook, and the features of the site itself are being utilised to disseminate information, not only on Islam but also the Islamic etiquette of using Facebook (See Appendix 7, Page 331); for instance sharing in the forms of links to articles, Islamic quotations as status updates, and photos by a number of students discussed in chapter five. Just as Kahn (2008) has written on the new Muslim sensibility among the Malays and their use of new media technologies that transform religious practices (refer to the cited text in Page 36). This is similar to the work of Kong (2001; 2006) on the mediation of religious beliefs and practices by technology and findings of Hopkins et al. (2011) and Olson et al. (2013) on the changes in the spaces of religious transmission. Intergenerational religious transmissions are seen, in the work, to have transferred to other religious spaces and outside of familial engagements. Facebook in this case is seen as new spaces where religious teachings are transmitted. This different form of transmission also resulted to different form of religious agency among this group of youth. Rather than relying or being confined to religious institutions the individuals themselves become an agent to disseminate religious teachings (sometimes based on own

interpretations). This interestingly brings to front two significant matters for the studies in particular geographies of religion that has recently called for the (transnational) individual as religious agent (Olson et al., 2013) and the inclusion of online space as significant space where religious teachings are shared and religions are practiced (Kong, 2001).

The students believed moderate Islamic sharing to be a responsibility due to their identity as Muslims. For a female respondent, Izzah, who is working towards becoming a better Muslimah<sup>75</sup>, sharing such Islamic articles fits the image of the person she wishes to be. There is an understanding among these Malay Muslim Facebook users that other Malay Muslim Malaysians use Facebook in Islamically acceptable ways, creating this imagined community that Benedict Anderson (1983/2006) refers to in his book. The commonly observed every day sharing and the expectations brought online, create a common discourse that everyone else from their group, even at the minimal level, should act accordingly. The expectations are extended to every Malay Muslim Malaysian Facebook user particularly to those who are overseas. In this case an understanding of Islam remains as if they are at home but to some degree are contested (negotiated) by some respondents who saw that being in the UK with different socio-cultural expectations, they should at least try to fit in, and blend in, to some extent. Luqman and other respondents shared their opinions and annoyance and using the expression such as *“they (those at home) don't understand our experience here”* to

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<sup>75</sup> An observant Muslim woman who not only covers herself physically but also refrains from doing any activities deemed inappropriate and unacceptable in Islamic teaching. This is synonymous to the concept of *Hijab*.



justify their behaviour. Clubbing, going to pubs, attending formals<sup>76</sup>, and parties for them are ways to interact and create social bonds with their local and international friends. As discussed in previous chapters, such activities are unacceptable to their society but due to the separation of these contexts from home contexts, they do not find themselves in trouble but sharing them on Facebook or accidentally being shared on Facebook. An accidental example was Luqman's party photos, tagged by his friends on Facebook, which then appeared on the newsfeed for his family, friends, and colleagues and acquaintances to see, putting him in a difficult spot. For his cultural other friends, such photos would be unlikely to cause much concern but for those from his own group, especially family members, such (unintended) presentation of self becomes a problem. The respondents, when placed in such situations find themselves troubled, torn between presenting oneself as an open individual, free to socialise (by partying for example) and being an individual bounded by their socio-cultural and religious strictures. What has been discussed so far here are the strategic presentations of self within a confined context, and that using a number of mechanisms such as utilising privacy settings, strategic self-disclosure and self-censorship, allows a user to negotiate their self as desired. But it is important to note that not all openness is performed. Many Facebook users are more concerned with presenting a Muslim/Muslimah front, than offering explicit openness when they are seen as conflicting with one another. Exact reasons for these behaviours are not definite but it could be safely assumed that one has no motivation to present oneself as open, when the embedded sensibilities (detaching

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<sup>76</sup> University (college) formal dinner that requires students to wear formal dress, gowns and suits.

oneself from own ethnic religious identity, seeking for similarity and differences concurrently) are not necessarily performed as felt.

What this section on cosmopolitanism as a strategy highlights is that acting as a cosmopolitan (although not intended by the respondents as 'cosmopolitan') is part of their everyday life and what Goffman's theorised in his *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Everyone is involved in performance of self in everyday life with the aim to present a self that is socially acceptable and maintains one's positive image in front of other social actors. Cosmopolitanism, in terms of extending and performing openness and accepting others, is not detached from respondents' everyday lives but is linked to their everyday experiences and self-expression; self-exploration that found them in a constant dilemma in presenting oneself as open according to the contexts (situation and audience). Although the strategic actions are performed on Facebook, we still see similar offline decorum and norms on the site. Everyday social actors are involved in specific performances to appear as acceptable as possible; in the experiences of some these students appearing as good Muslims, adhering to religious teaching and socio-cultural expectations, as well as an open individual who is religiously and culturally detached. Everyday self-presentation for some of the respondents is a strategy which sometimes involved a 'cosmopolitan' strategy.

What do these experiences shared by the respondents say about cosmopolitan sensibilities and their performance? Kendall et al.'s (2009) cosmopolitanism features are explicated by these respondents' actual performances, the process

they went through throughout their lives and the constant negotiations they are in. Cosmopolitanism as performance is often neglected in cosmopolitanism discourse that seems to conflate sensibilities and actual expressions of openness in terms of performance together. It is important to recognise both as two different yet connected cosmopolitanism aspects; those that are not necessarily observed to be hand-in-hand in an individual's everyday encounter with social others (which will be revisited in a later section of this chapter). What happens when an individual refuses to engage with others online? In this case, expression of openness, tolerance and flexibilities cannot be observed. Sometimes being open to cultural differences does not require one to explicitly express such an orientation; for instance in daily conversations between social actors, people are not always interested in actively debating certain points of view but would rather let certain controversial topics pass by without necessarily commenting on them. They might not blindly accept potentially contested ideas but will refrain from rebuking others due to respect for others' thoughts. This situation and social skill are replicated online on Facebook when some respondents found contested topics; they purposively refrain from engaging with the sharer but covertly mentally agree or disagree with them. Their mental engagements are not seen online and cannot possibly be accessed. They could probably extend openness but this is not apparent to other users. In such a case openness is not performed and sensibilities remain as/in one's thoughts. What this leads us to is not only the possibility of sensibilities not expressed explicitly, but also the idea of refusing to engage as a cosmopolitan act which the next section will discuss.

### 7.2.2. Refusal to Engage

One of the interests of this thesis is the performance of cosmopolitanism through sociabilities (social interactions). Cosmopolitan sociabilities are defined as the “forms of competence and communication skills that are based on the human capacity to create social relations of inclusiveness and openness to the world” (Glick Schiller et al., 2011: 402). Assessing the respondents’ actual social interactions through interviews and online observations provided this research with rich findings on the topics users engage or refuse to engage with<sup>77</sup>, and how they deal with ideas so different from their own socio-cultural and religious contexts by deploying their communication skills. It is also because of the obscurity of one’s thoughts and that some cosmopolitan openness is not acted upon, hence the interviews provided the way to delve deeper into this mental engagement.

Facebook emphasises social interactions; it provides the means for facilitating social interactions and engagements at the micro and macro level. The features plus its affordances provide (a)synchronous communication enabling users to engage in discussions by leaving comments on others’ updates (status, links or photos) that follows one another, which marks the potential for cosmopolitan sociabilities. However, not everyone is willing to communicate with cultural others or engage in online discussion. What happens when people refuse to engage, how is

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<sup>77</sup> Such a focus is recommended by Valentine (2008) to further understand contexts of social encounters.

cosmopolitanism assessed and what does it say about the individuals? If we refer to the definition of cosmopolitanism, particularly Hannerz's highly cited definition that emphasises the "willingness to engage", a refusal to engage contradicts the very idea of the concept. Cosmopolitanism is about engaging with others (as discussed in chapter six) but how about those who refuse to engage, by ignoring what they see online; could that still be considered a cosmopolitan act? Online, there is no physical marker to indicate one's refusal to engage, what is seen are the after thoughts and deliberated responses. The thinking process and those information that are not disclosed online are not accessible to others. It is difficult to assess whether a user is unwilling to engage or strategically extend openness through stepping back and avoiding confrontation and hence to extend respect, avoid complexities and the potential of offending others. For many respondents, rather than getting themselves involved in discussions or arguments on specific issues and in that process offend others, they chose not to directly engage but keep track of the issues by following the discussions. In interacting with others verbally, face to face, social actors might resort to silent disagreement, rather than explicitly disagreeing with what is said to maintain that harmony, as well as saving someone else and oneself from public embarrassment. This saving others from embarrassment by not challenging what they have said and repairing the damage that has been done to one's face, espouses Goffman's face working (face saving), where social actors are always working to protect the other person they are interacting with. As discussed in chapter five, face-saving is not alien in the Malay Muslim culture. It is part of their everyday life not to embarrass others. If they do not leave any comments on other users' updates, does that make them less open or

less willing to engage? I contend what they demonstrated are strategic performance of openness, not saying anything is for many the best strategy to deal with differences although the respondents may mentally engage with the topics discussed. This refusal to engage is a strategy similar to the respondents strategic use of the settings of the site to control sharing or the mental self-censorship they are involved with prior to posting on the site for instance Luqman's and Razali's strategic self-disclosure and self-censorship strategies discussed earlier.

What do these respondents actually refuse to engage with? Presentation and performance of self are not different from their everyday activities as argued in the previous sections and chapters. Cosmopolitanism and extending openness, flexibilities and tolerance are not worlds apart from their everyday experiences; as chapter six has highlighted and discussed, sensibilities are embedded and practiced every day. What these respondents selectively chose to engage with and refuse to engage with, are tied to their day to day experiences and these topics differ according to individual's situation and experiences. Some respondents are willing to engage with complex topics if he/she knows he/she is politically and socially correct (Valentine, 2008). One respondent shared his careful actions and concern not to get embroiled in heated political debates; but in another situation he actually posted a mild political statement which positions him in a group that see certain wrongs that needed to be straightened out. The comment below, taken from his Facebook profile, shows him to be engaging head-on with those with different political and social values. Openness in the form of self-detachment and seeking for equality among different races in his country is apparent here. His comment

resonates with Yao's New Malay's sympathy towards the situations other less privileged races (Chinese and Indian) in Malaysia are experiencing (reviewed in chapter two).

*Razali - "We dont have to do anything. Vernacular school is the prime issue. The gov has to do something. Certain things are better off with equality. Things that related to education etc, you dont have to be Malay to get those privileges. If youre fair and square, non-Malays wont feel unease. They need to feel like their home. I was grown up with the chinese family as my neighbour and they are so helpful to our family. I went to chinese school in secondary and learnt the concept of "competing". After I entered uitm, simply I can say, I never feel like competing in both diploma and degree with my classmates but still I ended up as abest students in both. Now, I lived totally with chinese community, stray dogs are everywhere but why I never feel like moving? Because chinese has one mind set, they wont disturb you at all. Thats their life. Mentality of racism needs to be healed from now on before it getting worst"<sup>78</sup>.*

In this case he is willing to engage directly on what he considers (politically) wrong and which should be corrected to ensure equality among all Malaysians, regardless of their race. For some, distancing self is the best decision to make rather than tackling differences head-on to avoid misunderstanding and complications in relationships; which again demonstrate the nuances in individuals' experiences of differences and how they tackle the issues.

Speaking of Facebook social interactions, the site affordances, particularly asynchronicity, provide the user with more than enough time to structure their

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<sup>78</sup> This comment is directly taken from his Facebook page and spelling errors are not edited.

words. One respondent said *“you can structure your words before replying...as words give a lot of impact more impact than verbal”*. This asynchronicity that Facebook offers, gives users ample time to restructure their sentences to achieve their purpose. The interview extract above might be written after a long deliberation. He purposely chose to engage in the matters above (racism, education, and equality). Extending openness through written text can be structured strategically and purposively written to avoid complexities and maintaining one’s image. The restructuring of replies/comments is not necessarily for performing openness but is pertinent to users’ daily use of the site, in creating certain images of themselves. This is significant for one’s self presentation online, which differs from offline interactions that only allow short time delays. As shown in Thomas (2004) findings of a study on digital literacies of Cybergirl online showed the intricate relationship between text and identities construction in the online space. According to Thomas (2004: 358) *“performance of identity is divorced from a direct interaction with these cues from the physical, and instead relies upon the texts we create in the virtual worlds. These texts are multiple layers through which we mediate the self and include the words we speak, the graphical images we adopt as avatars to represent us, and the codes and other linguistic variations on language we use to create a full digital presence”*.

This section has discussed performance of cosmopolitan sensibilities as a strategy, which the respondents experience in their everyday lives. Those sensibilities, when expressed, are always a product of negotiation and careful after-thought and are



part of their self- presentation. Presenting oneself as an open individual, and at the same time a Malay and Muslim, is complex because of the discord between these two characteristics for many of the respondents. Although extending openness, accepting others are part of the doctrines in Islam, specific issues placed the students in situations necessitating them to express an appropriate (acceptable) image of themselves. This discordance reflects the common debate within cosmopolitanism studies that separate religion from cosmopolitanism, due to the latter's Western liberal origin. Interestingly, despite the separation, both are also in harmony, as shown by some of the respondents' experiences in chapter six – using religious discourses to cultivate and express cosmopolitan sensibilities and also for rejecting cultural others resulted in rooted Muslim cosmopolitanism experiences that are context-based, temporal-based, spatial-based (to be discussed in the subsequent section), personal and particular to specific issues.

This section then went on to discuss that within cosmopolitanism it is important to acknowledge unwillingness to engage as part of a cosmopolitan strategy, not necessarily as an uncosmopolitan act; refraining oneself from engaging with sensitive matters can be part of one's extension of openness. In the next section, I will look into one aspect of their performance of religiosity (Hijab), in order to explore further this discordance between religion and cosmopolitanism which often led to the questionable nature of religious-based cosmopolitanism. The next section will highlight the complexities experienced by the respondents when put in situations where religion and general cosmopolitan openness contest each other.

### **7.3. Performance of Religiosity – Hijab and Intimacies on Facebook**

Religion is occasionally regarded as an anti-thesis of cosmopolitanism, because of the latter's Western origin that centres on liberalism, individualism and universalism and the detachment from any forms of religious beliefs (Calhoun, 2002 and Van der Verr 2002 in Mihelj et al., 2012); therefore performance of religiosity could be assumed as anti-cosmopolitan. This anti-thesis is very dominant in the earlier cosmopolitanism discourse that cannot accept any attachments to religion. However, the recent approaches to cosmopolitanism have started to acknowledge religion, nation, and culture as significant backdrops and contributors to cosmopolitan openness. This performance of religiosity (focusing specifically on the notion of hijab and intimacies) is central to this discussion of the performance of rooted Muslim cosmopolitanism. From this discussion of the respondents' online performance of religiosity, we should be able to delve into the issues, situations, contexts that have shaped the strategic performance of their cosmopolitan selves. We could be easily seduced into thinking performance of religiosity as un-cosmopolitan, seemingly a reaction to the globalised situations by going back to their roots but what we will observe in this section is that performance of religiosity such as donning hijab and the symbolic meaning of hijab as *private*, which sometimes led to restricted online behaviour, cannot be directly attributed to the user being un-cosmopolitan. What I want to tease out in this section is the notion

of hijab and public display of affections within the context of the blurring of private and public online and tying them back to the discussion on expressions of cosmopolitanism and the refusal to engage, as discussed in the previous section.

### **7.3.1. Privacy Issues and Online Sharing**

The respondents' definitions of privacy, and the related issues, are significant to the analysis of cosmopolitanism as they are important factors in the user's self-disclosure and self-censorship, which this research has stressed. To reiterate the discussion in chapter three, privacy is a subjective construct (Stutzman, 2011) thus must not be generalised; rather a researcher should attempt to find the variations in the (cultural and individual) definition of users' privacy, the contexts, and the time frame involved to comprehend users' online experiences. In the case of this research an examination of how privacy and its issues affect cosmopolitan performance on Facebook. Privacy can be generally defined as "a boundary control process whereby people sometimes make themselves open and accessible to others and sometimes close themselves off from others" (Altman, 1977: 67). This opening and closing, in the online context, refer to the negotiation between how much one shares and censors and with whom; a process that is never fixed but dynamic according to the situation one is in and in the presence of different audiences. For the respondents, being online, experiencing everyday life on the site is significant. On the site they saw both offline and online context co-exist and experiences flow seamlessly into one another. Due to this offline and online

connection, the respondents found themselves constantly negotiating different contexts.

I have argued throughout this thesis that in the heart of our attempt to understand the respondents' online behaviour, offline behaviour and experiences must be incorporated, as they are particularly significant in relation to matters of privacy. The idea of hijab and obligation of veiling offline for instance has been appropriated online. Privacy is an important issue online due to the site's exposures, collapsed context and individual's own impulse to share everyday happenings. Acceptance and understanding of privacy differ according to the individual, as has been mentioned in chapter five. For instance, a respondent requiring her privacy and the need to be isolated during stressful times chose to deactivate her Facebook account to gain control over her own space and time. Her definition of privacy includes her "alone time" online. Another respondent's idea of privacy does not lie in the size or the types of audience he has on Facebook but in the validity of his identity. Choosing a blog over Facebook for more detailed and elaborated sharing provided him with the desired level of privacy. The anonymity a blog offers, provides him with more privacy and security than Facebook, where his identity is known. He explicates what boyd (2007) has said of her teen respondents' view on online privacy: security through obscurity. Desired privacy is lost when one's identity can be validated. This also resembles the earlier focus on potential self-expression in an anonymous environment online (Turkle, 1995). Anonymity allows him to express himself through his blog writing without having to worry about what his potential audience may think of him. Open blog pages, with an invisible and unknown

audience, ironically provide more privacy than his Facebook closed network with its known (as well as unknown) audience. These two examples demonstrate the variation in the defining of privacy (private and public). Many other respondents also claimed that Facebook has lost its privacy, due to the growing number of their F/friends on the site. While some recognised the growing size of their network, the site is considered private due to the users' ability to strategically manage their public and private spaces and sharing, using available features; thus the growing size of friends is not relative to their privacy concerns. However, the growing concern on the loss of privacy, due to the network's size, elucidates the temporal aspect of one's definition of privacy and of the site's itself.

I have so far talked about general privacy matters but have yet to explain why privacy is so significant to their self-disclosure and self-censorship and why it is important to negotiate the boundaries between openness and closure. An understanding of privacy (as earlier studies have delved into) is concerned with what are public and what are private. In offline spaces, the public and private binary is clearly laid out. For instance, one considers his/her bedroom/house as a private space, one's safe haven and cafes, parks, schools, and supermarkets as public space. The clearly laid out spaces and the behaviour expected from within these spaces are specific. However, if we come back to what Goffman has said of the temporality of the spaces, which can become open or closed, we could expect the private and public offline spaces to be blurred and fluid: for the purpose of highlighting the online impact on privacy here I consider offline private and public spaces to be separated. Blurring in online sites, as discussed in earlier studies, refers

to visibility, access to the information by multiple audiences (Baym and boyd, 2012). The demarcation of private and public has been translated online in ways that are both different and similar to offline. Blurring of public and private spheres on Facebook speaks more than just about visibility and access to information, but of the nature of information itself, what users share, how a user generally behaves online and their organisation of self. It is known that Facebook's infrastructure has become the affordances that support micro-scale mundane everyday sharing and because of its affordance what used to be private becomes public. This can be seen in its accessibility, virtual reach, and ease of use feeding into user's compulsion to share everything on Facebook, for instance. We see the blurring of public and private spheres on Facebook but what is rarely focused upon, and is of equal importance, is how the individual users themselves define "private" and "public", how society defines them and the differences between the two. How a user sees his or her offline-online world and organise their "self" online, differs from how others see theirs. There is this tug of war between the respondents' own definition of public and private and other users' definition as well as Facebook's definition of public and private too. A user gets reprimanded for "inappropriate" behaviour according to another person's own concept of acceptable sharing, and definition of public and private. Interestingly, some Facebook-literate users, those whose knowledge of the available privacy settings is vast, could easily resort to these settings to manage their sharing and self. Those who are not as literate as these aforementioned users would or could resort to self-censorship and controlling what they disclose to successfully manage their "acceptable" self, a strategy discussed in the previous section. Privacy here is according to what their society expects (what

should remain private and what can be shared publicly). These are not written parameters, but are understood by users from the same socio-cultural context as discussed in previous empirical chapters. What they consider as private materials is specific to them: for example, literal hijab (veiling and unveiling) and a display of affection are not considered by everyone as private matters. Everyday activities of Facebook, sharing location using location-based app for some people are not considered private matters but others may see it differently, as presented in chapter five. This idea of veiling and unveiling is often translated online, where individuals see online as similar to offline with regards to their *Aurat*<sup>79</sup> in online space. However, there are others who conceived them to be different - offline being “in person” and online as “from a distance”, not in the actual flesh. When in presence of an audience (family members, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances) on Facebook, users become involved in this push and pull process; in constant negotiation and always trying to find that middle spot as we have understood from previous chapters. It is within this religious private and public privacy context that the next section is discussed.

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<sup>79</sup> Parts of a woman’s body that must be covered in front of others. *Aurat* coverage depends upon the relationship the woman has with the others. For instance, aurat with non-Muslim women/men and Muslim men (who she could marry) is all of the woman’s body except for her face and hands. However, when with family members such as parents, siblings, husband, and children a woman’s *aurat* differs.

### 7.3.2. Hijab, Intimacies and Cosmopolitanism

Hijab<sup>80</sup>, often used interchangeably with headscarf or veil, is a symbol of a Muslim woman, which is tied to the private aspect of their self and life. According to El Guindi (1999) the term veil is commonly used in the European discourse to refer to the act of covering one's (woman) face and head and at that neglected the complexities and deeper cultural and religion meanings of the act of veiling. In this research, veil is often conflated with *hijab*, which many women use when referring to the act of covering their body; one's behaviour is shaped by this act of veiling too<sup>81</sup>. Donning hijab proclaims one identity to the public, a symbol that signifies specific behaviour, eliciting treatment befitting its meaning. Muslim and *hijab* brings specific ways of behaving online and offline. The idea of hijab as veiling and the comprehensive definition of this term are translated online and influence their self-expression on Facebook. It also transforms their relationships with the wider environment (Tarlo, 2007). In the Western world, it is commonly heard that hijab is tied to "ideas of patriarchy, oppression, victimhood, ignorance, tradition, barbarism, foreignness, fundamentalism, suspicion and the threat of violence" (Tarlo, 2007: 11). Hence it is not a surprise that it is often seen as the opposite to openness (hence cosmopolitanism). However, for the female respondents in this

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<sup>80</sup> Italicised hijab is used for the notion of privacy while un-italicised hijab for literal donning of hijab or veiling.

<sup>81</sup> Hijab must not be narrowed down to the act of veiling (covering one's head) only. Understanding of the term must take into account "historical developments, cultural differentiation of social context, class, or special rank, and socio-political articulations" (El-Guindi 1999: 157). However in this study hijab and veiling are conflated, according to the understanding of these two terms by the respondents.



study, literal donning of hijab is an obligation they happily accept<sup>82</sup>, without which they feel uneasy and *naked*. Presenting self as a Muslim for many respondents (particularly female via hijab) is not a barrier to social interactions. In their experiences cosmopolitan openness is not performed through their sartorial preferences; unlike some male respondents, such as Luqman, who opted to leave his religious-cultural clothing for Western outfits, in order to portray an open self<sup>83</sup>. This conflation of religion (including corporeal display) and narrow-mindedness and closure are contested by some scholars such as Tarlo (2007), and public, who demonstrated how cosmopolitanism is interwoven with fashion, religion, politics and aesthetics in interesting ways. Rather than observing anti-cosmopolitanism on three high profiled and successful professional Muslim women in London Islamic dressing, she saw cosmopolitan lifestyles which contest the common binary that separates religious from secular, Eastern from Western, Islam from the West. Islamic cosmopolitanism seems to have emerged within fashions that saw politics, culture and religion fused. The findings of this research however did not see similar patterns of Islamic cosmopolitanism through sartorial presentation online, but a complex acceptance and reworking of various interpretation of *hijab* to negotiate Muslim self and others, through which their particular form of Islamic cosmopolitanism is apparent. Sartorial presentation of openness is not visible

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<sup>82</sup> This individual decision to wear hijab is also expressed by Muslim women in Haleh Afshar's (2008) study.

<sup>83</sup> This signals a gendered performance of (cultural and religious) openness which can be further explored by future research. Some scholars such as Ye and Kelly (2011) have discussed cosmopolitan characteristics in workplace, which include gendered dimension of bodily self-presentation and clothing. Their paper focuses on the idea of cosmopolitanism in workplace (economic conditions) not on cultural-religious cosmopolitanism focused in this study.

among those who wear hijab in this study, but what I observed was the idea of public and private (*hijab*) in sharing information, were applied in their everyday lives online. This public and private (within Islamic context) binary is a significant factor in shaping the Facebook users' everyday strategic online sharing (cosmopolitan performance).

Izzah, mentioned earlier in this chapter, who is at the time of the interview was in the process of improving herself, to become a better Muslimah, limits her connections with boys on open spaces such as Wall posts but accepts messages sent to her Inbox, which she considers a private space. The strategic use of open and private spaces, in her case, allows for a coherent 'positive' self to be maintained. Because she has made a resolution to improve herself, she needs to maintain the Muslimah attitude and identity both offline and online. Talking openly to boys on her Facebook contradicts what is expected of a Muslimah, therefore she decided to block access to her Wall but happily accepts private messages. By blocking her Wall she is not refusing to engage with others, but she has resorted to a different mode of communicating (direct communication via Message) rather than interacting openly on her Wall. The strategic uses of features (public and private spaces) to maintain an impression one wishes to convey are not new to many participants. When conversation became too private or sensitive they would put a halt to the conversation on their Wall posts and continue using Message (Inbox) or the Chat feature. This strategic and seamless appropriation of features allows sensitive and private conversations to continue without the possibility of tarnishing anyone's reputation (especially hers). What this highlights is the

impression management process she went through; by using the available features to alter the stages of her performance from open to closed, and prohibiting access to open spaces online, she managed to maintain her Muslimah identity. The idea of spaces as fluid in the online spaces and the spatial context of performance of (open) self are demonstrated here. If specific audience is assumed to be unable to accept one's behaviour, the social interactions can be transferred elsewhere, highlighting the significance of spaces/places in influencing social interactions and cosmopolitanism, and that there is spatial enactment of a Muslim identity online, indicating not only spatial performance of cosmopolitanism but also the idea that scholars of geographies of religion has espoused. That is performance of religiosity of practices of Islamic teaching in the online space (Kong, 2001; 2006). The above mentioned behaviour is not only expected of a Muslim woman but a Muslim man too. One respondent shared his experience:

*Luqman – there is this one time this girl is being over-friendly on Facebook, which I find it fine but my brother started to ask - Are you dating her? I find it a bit uncomfortable for him to make such assumption. They never see how our real life interactions here. I'm not offended, just a bit like uncomfortable and a bit unnecessary.*

The reaction from his brother could be interpreted differently. It could be sarcasm or simply an honest question. However, being asked that question the respondent is put in a difficult situation and knowing the socio-cultural and religious expectations his society has of him, this situation led him to doubt his online actions. This online interaction is conducted between Luqman and another social

actor but their conversations were available to the unintended audience (brother) due to the site's infrastructure and this resulted in social interactions that are out of context and time, unlike those offline. Similar to hijab, which is considered private, intimacies (public displays of affection and sharing intimate details) are also considered private matters that must not be shared online (or offline). Their Malay Muslim context places them in a situation whereby the students are obliged to refrain from explicitly displaying any/some forms of affection. One of the examples of a behaviour considered inappropriate is an intimate relationship between a single Malay Muslim woman and a single Malay Muslim man. It is considered inappropriate to show intimacy or deep familiarity between a woman and a man who has no official relations. Such behaviour will be questioned and contested.

The above reaction is rarely found among those who are already married. Malays are more lenient to married couple involved in some intimacy and the showing of affection online but this too has its limits. Excessive expression of intimacy and affection are expected to be reserved to private areas, not open spaces like Facebook. Online spaces are public spaces and with the affordances (Persistence, Replicability, Searchability, Scalability) sites like Facebook offer we are seeing real life examples that demonstrate the blurring of private and public matters, "without control over context, public and private become meaningless binaries, are scaled in new ways, and are difficult to maintain as distinct" (boyd, 2008: 34). This expectation of woman-man relationship is accepted and understood by all Malays as part of their culture and religion. It is something that cannot be contested openly. Knowing this all their lives, these respondents are very cautious when

expressing themselves openly on Facebook. Their self-reflexivity not only is influenced by the prior knowledge they have, but also the persistent cultural and religious expectations members have of online interactions and actions an individual learns from others' online activities and reactions they received.

A married postgraduate student shared his thoughts on expressing affection on Facebook. From the interview excerpt included below it seems that the respondent wishes to break free from the restricting social expectations by expressing his love for his wife publicly on Facebook. Seeing different cultures, whose members are openly expressing their affection to others, he sees there is no problem in doing so and would like to encourage other Malays to do the same offline and online.

*Zainal – Honestly when we (are) here I try to how do you say compare my culture with their culture because basically what we say is we have Malaysian cultures which is adat (custom) and everything...you can say that Malaysian totally especially Malays don't really express their love...towards their spouse so even my parents they would be reserved in expressing it to the kids so you can never say it. When I'm here and then I think she (his wife who is half Swedish and half Malay Malaysian) was brought up in that kind (showing affection openly) of environment. This people will express their love to their spouse wherever. You can see old people still holding hands while walking, those are the things you, one you are supposed to do it more even after you are married.*

Based on the experiences they (Izzah, Luqman and Zainal) shared here, we know that openly sharing affection and interaction with the opposite sex is unacceptable; to maintain one's Malay Muslim image the respondents had to resort to contextually appropriate social interactions, for instance using more private (closed

to other audience) features. Donning hijab and its notion of privacy are seemingly un-cosmopolitan due to the restrictions imposed on the individual users and its relation to religion which, as I have written, has been assumed as an anti-thesis to cosmopolitanism. Izzah in this case seems to refuse to engage with others publicly online but strategically relocates social interactions to more private spaces. From other users' views, lack of public social interactions could indicate an isolated individual who does not interact much with others and could possibly be labelled as someone who is "unwilling to engage". However, in reality she is neither isolated nor unwilling to engage but has strategically organised her social interactions to fit into the public/private expectations of others and her own interpretation. To reiterate the point made on the obscurity of others' activities online, due to self-censorship, strategic self-disclosure conducted mentally and literally using Facebook settings, we cannot straightforwardly or automatically assume that an individual is un-cosmopolitan due to his/her (seemingly) lack of interactions on Facebook. Furthermore, not all sensibilities are necessarily shown graphically or textually. She might be expressing other forms of cosmopolitan sensibilities elsewhere (offline and online) or only mentally extending them. Some users (such as Zainal) did choose to go against what is expected of them; for instance the public display of affections, which we can label as a cosmopolitan act, due to the fact that the user embraces other cultures, questions his/her own culture, and becomes detached, to a greater or lesser degree, from ones' own customs. However, not doing so should not make them any less cosmopolitan and those engaged in performance of religiosity, such as donning hijab and refraining oneself from engaging with cultural others and opposite sex, should not be branded as parochial

and un-cosmopolitan: these examples again elucidate the argument made in chapter six against labelling someone cosmopolitan or the opposite.

What the respondents' experiences showed is that performing religiosity (such as through literal donning of hijab and refraining oneself from sharing intimate materials following their religious teachings) while performing/having cosmopolitan sensibilities, can co-exist. This follows the discussion in chapter six on the dilemma some respondents find themselves in. They expressed openness in some matters but chose to close themselves up as regards other (homosexuality for instance), which explicate the dependency of cosmopolitanism on the contexts, circumstances and the individuals themselves. The use of religious teachings as discursive resources to extend openness (and to reject others) is a significant factor that shaped the students' Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism. This section has looked into the separation of religion from cosmopolitanism and used the respondents' experiences to show that religion and cosmopolitanism co-exist. Expressing self as a Muslim for instance through performance of religiosity (hijab and intimacies) cannot be conflated as an un-cosmopolitan act. We need to go deeper into each student's own situation and context to comprehend their cosmopolitan sensibilities and performance and what inhibited the individuals from extending them. By doing this we would be able to show what are performed when an individual is placed in certain circumstances. The findings of this study also have shown that even within a general grouping of Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism the participants' experiences vary.

#### **7.4. Re-examining Cosmopolitan Sensibilities and Cosmopolitan Performance**

The following is the definition of cosmopolitanism, as set out by Kendall et al. (2009: 108), that this thesis discussed and employed in chapter three: “a set of structurally grounded and locatable, discursive resources available to social actors which is variably deployed to deal with emergent agendas and issues, related to things like cultural diversity, the global, and otherness...a *cultural repertoire performed by individuals* to deal with objects, experiences and people and which is encouraged by particular contexts, fusions of circumstance and motive, and frames of interpretation”. Such a definition highlights the distinctiveness of cosmopolitan sensibilities and performance which requires an analytical separation to provide a much detailed understanding of cosmopolitanism that is grounded in individual everyday experiences, contexts, situations and how those factors are cultivated and performed. The previous chapter has brought to front the nuances of cosmopolitan consciousness of these respondents and discussed how that extension of openness to cultural others and one’s own group is negotiated within their *home* (socio-cultural and religious) contexts. Realisation of their marked and subtle differences with others, as well as the similarities they share, became the resources that helped cultivate cosmopolitan consciousness (online and offline). For some respondents, seeking for differences allow them to understand what makes them different, as well as using those differences to extend respect and openness. These differences for some respondents can also become the reasons for further isolation and rejection of further social interactions. The sensibilities cultivated hence vary



according to the individual's own subjectivities. This chapter focuses on what cosmopolitan sensibilities are performed, and from the findings discussed in previous chapters and reiterated here, sensibilities are very individual, contextual, and temporal. This conclusion led to the assumption that performance would vary too and be as complex, if not more, than the extension of openness that remains as thoughts and feelings. When an individual extends openness internally, they are involved in a negotiation process (internal monologue) with themselves, the idea of a Malay Muslim individual and the pressure to adhere to his or her religion. No one else has access to his or her thoughts, rendering extension of openness, regardless of how contested it is, to remain enclosed. However, performance of these sensibilities is not as sheltered as one's thoughts. Particularly on Facebook, where some respondents claimed to be less private due to its social networking nature, as seen in the increasing network size and its diversity (Binder et al., 2009), having multiple contexts and audiences present in one place (boyd, 2008; Vitak et al., 2012), privacy issues (Stutzman et al., 2011) and the affordances such as persistence of data. In online space, one's actions are available to be read, recalled and replayed by his/her audience (Erickson, 1999 and Erickson and Herring, 2000 cited in Bregman and Haythornthwaite, 2003: 119), hence allowing performances to be questioned and worst being reprimanded by others. These complexities led to strategic presentation of self, and those sensibilities embedded in an individual, not entirely expressed online. Sensibilities and performance (sociabilities and exhibition) are both connected and disconnected at the same time. The home context they are bounded within, plays a significant role in crystallising sensibilities to actual performance. The individual contexts that co-exist with the dominant

socio-cultural and religious contexts result in performances that are individualised and strategic. One example is the use of religion, teachings of Islam that emphasise respect, compassion and love toward others, as a resource to unconditionally accept others; however, being a Muslim itself becomes a hindrance to express openness explicitly. Individuals are placed in two situations with regards to being a Muslim and extending openness on Facebook. First, in presenting self as a Muslim to cultural others, which can indicate restrictiveness and second, the expression of openness itself contradicts the very teaching of Islam. In the former, Islam is equated to being closed minded, restricted to specific social norms, labelled as a 'terrorists' religion' in which Islam is commonly conflated with terrorism (Mamdani, 2005; Iqtidar, 2008; Edmunds, 2013) and does not indicate an open individual. Therefore presenting self as a Muslim becomes a burden for some respondents, who wish to present a self as open as possible to cultural others and not one attached to a religion that is assumed to be restrictive, which could create more barriers than it already had. In the latter, expressing openness through acceptance of those other socio-cultural activities that are considered un-Islamic is unacceptable by members of one's own group. How are cosmopolitan sensibilities performed online where audiences are diverse, and where socio-cultural and religious boundaries have collapsed, creating what is called context collapse or collapsed context? The site's infrastructure and features became the respondents' affordances and/or obstacles to cosmopolitan expressions. Just as cosmopolitan sensibilities are complex, laden with dilemmas, exclusion and inclusion, ignorance and acceptance, cosmopolitan performances are too, being a cosmopolitan includes risks; in particular risk to self for expressing openness, tolerance and

flexibilities outside the expectations of one's own cultural groups on the site. These situations place users in a dilemma that requires a specific 'neutral' self to be expressed on Facebook through strategic self-disclosure, self-censorship and the effective use of the site's settings and features in order for that dilemma to be solved. As a result, not all sensibilities that are embedded and further developed over time become expressed in performance of self on Facebook. The findings provide a different angle from which to view the conceptualisation of cosmopolitanism to include both sensibilities and performances and cosmopolitanism are strategically expressed and performed as it is willingly and unconditionally extended. The respondents exhibit a specific form of cosmopolitanism, 'Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism', that is rooted in the respondents' Malay Muslim identity and shaped by circumstances, contexts, spaces and time.

## **7.5. Summary**

This chapter has provided a discussion of cosmopolitan performance, an aspect of cosmopolitanism that is less explored, especially in online spaces. It argued that cosmopolitan performance similar to sensibilities can be a strategy deployed by individuals to help them navigate their everyday life offline and online. Online spaces, unlike offline, due to their features, affordances, general networking infrastructure have resulted to collapsed context and blurring of private and public binary. For these reasons, individual users resorted to a number of strategies to

help them present self that is socially acceptable to different contexts and groups. They resorted to customising settings, self-disclosure and self-censorship and also taking advantage of features with a private nature, such as Message, to allow them to successfully present the expected self to different audiences, which reveals the prevalence of spatial performance of Muslim self. The notion of religion as an anti-thesis to cosmopolitanism, as commonly observed, is contested in this chapter. Discursive resources the respondents use to deal with difference, to accept or to reject cultural others, come from their religion – Islam, creating a specific form of cosmopolitanism which I labelled Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism. Looking into the performance of religiosity (hijab and intimacies) it was argued that the notion of privacy, that is subjective and a social construct, shaped the respondents online sharing and performance of openness. The social networking nature of Facebook led to the blurring of public and private binary which did not exactly result in a redefinition of public and private but a re-appropriation of them – Islamically-defined public and private spheres. Re-appropriation that is not similar to other users from different contexts and backgrounds that further complicates their online social interactions. Privacy issues (private/public binary), as one factor that shaped cosmopolitan expression, are not commonly discussed in the cosmopolitanism discourse but this thesis finds it imperative to look into the matter of privacy issues due to the nature of online space that blurs the private and public binary. Offline space and social interactions may be similarly affected by this privacy matter and this requires further exploration to seek for potential differences and similarities between online and offline cosmopolitanism. What this chapter and thesis offer is a new angle to conceptualise the term cosmopolitanism, using the form of

cosmopolitanism that is rooted in their identity and everyday experiences. We can no longer simply accept cosmopolitanism as liberal but must also acknowledge the nuances, as a handful of scholars have done in recent years. These scholars recognised the everyday experiences, the grounded identity of individuals as significant in shaping cosmopolitan experiences (both cultivation of sensibilities and their performance). This chapter has argued for grounded cosmopolitan analyses to understand individuals' actual experiences, what matters to them, what does not and the actual circumstances they found themselves in, rather than simply saying whether one is capable or incapable of being a cosmopolitan (extending openness). What are the circumstances that force them to act accordingly and possibly to refuse to engage? Refusal to engage does not automatically indicate a person incapable of social interactions and one who is un-cosmopolitan; it could be an act, a strategy deployed to avoid offending others, saving another's face or simply not performing openness in the way we are expecting it to be performed. This highlights the loose notion of performance in this case. Openness can be performed or not and this makes research in this field complex because cosmopolitan openness cannot be detected through observation but through thorough analyses and specific research design that includes the potential respondents' experiences to be shared and captured. The discussion in this chapter, using the respondents' experiences says a lot about the concept of cosmopolitanism, which is still elusive in its exact definition. The author has concluded that this research cannot provide a comprehensive definition for the term. However, what this research can add to is the grounded understanding of a group of Malay Malaysian students' cosmopolitan experiences, while in the UK pursuing their tertiary education experiences. This

understanding embraces their dilemmas, exclusion and inclusion, ignorance and acceptance, the contexts and circumstances at which specific forms of openness are extended (performed or refrained); an understanding that should help in our attempt to broaden and deepen our knowledge of cosmopolitanism and to provide a new approach for Malaysians' cosmopolitanism discourse and cosmopolitanism studies in general. This penultimate chapter offered a re-examination of cosmopolitan sensibilities and cosmopolitan performance, in order to draw both together and to reiterate the imperative of observing them separately and together, by drawing from and on the arguments made in preceding chapters.

# Chapter Eight

## Conclusion

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### **8.1. Cosmopolitanism on Facebook – a Summary**

As I was (re)writing this chapter, I was concerned with a number of questions including: in what way should I write this chapter, to finally provide a closure to this research? I re-read the Introduction chapter, recalled what I had promised to convey at the very beginning and the subsequent chapters to ensure that I have delivered what I promised. This chapter is written with all the earlier chapters in mind and the discussions within them. For every beginning there must be an end and a beginning for every end. This final chapter serves as the concluding chapter for this thesis but it does not stop the research journey or this thesis author's academic journey and self-exploration. Although, this chapter hopes to provide concluding remarks for this thesis - "Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism: An Ethnographic Study of Malay Malaysian Students' Cultivation and Performance of Cosmopolitanism on Facebook and Offline" -- it does not aim to offer a closure for this research on rooted-to-everyday-experiences cosmopolitanism. Rather it aims to revisit the discussion made on rooted Muslim cosmopolitanism in the empirical chapters of this thesis and to tie them to Malaysian cosmopolitanism and the general cosmopolitanism discourse, in order to again highlight the significance and limitations of this research. From which, the potential for future research in

cosmopolitanism and the researcher's future academic endeavours will be highlighted.

In the introduction chapter I have asked: "could cosmopolitanism develop through online interactions on Facebook? What contexts do these Malay Muslim students found themselves in both online and offline? What discursive resources do users draw from their contextualised everyday online interactions (cosmopolitan sensibilities), and how are cosmopolitanism sensibilities (openness, tolerance and flexibility) performed within these contexts?" The empirical chapters of this thesis have answered the questions by drawing the nuanced experiences of the UK based Malay Malaysians students, shared by themselves via personal interviews. Through an ethnographic approach to seek for the answers to the research questions, I found out that cosmopolitanism can develop out of online interactions. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that the level of influence online interactions have on their cultivation of cosmopolitanism varies, and that an individual's cosmopolitan sensibilities and performances also vary, resulting from individual experiences. Their cosmopolitanism, as anticipated at the beginning of the research, is indeed contextually-based, spatially-based and temporally-based, hence creating cosmopolitanism that is unique to their own self and group. It is also significant to take note that their offline experiences are valuable and provide them with the discursive resources and experiences to extend specific openness, tolerance and flexibility. The contribution of their offline social interaction to their experiences questioned the potential of new social media in culturally reaching social others. I



have emphasised and questioned the potential of new social media in enhancing one's cultural cosmopolitan consciousness. The affordances of the site of this study, Facebook, should have allowed an individual to connect with anyone (strangers) but in the experiences of the respondents despite the ease of connection the site offers, their reach is very narrow; a narrow virtual reach that resulted in ethnically dominated Facebook networks. Nonetheless, this network did not render the students incapable of extending openness, tolerance and flexibility and nor were they insensitive to others' situations; rather it resulted in different forms of cosmopolitan experiences that are shaped by their Malay Muslim context: a specific context brought online creating a "*home away from home*" situation, which I will revisit in the section on Revisiting Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism below.

The experiences of the students, shared and discussed in this thesis, highlighted the nuances in their everyday experiences and consequently their varying cosmopolitan sensibilities and performances of those sensibilities. These nuances and the apparent disconnection between sensibilities and performance explicate Kendall et al.'s (2009: 108) comprehension of cosmopolitanism as "a set of structurally grounded and locatable, discursive resources available to social actors which is variably deployed to deal with emergent agendas and issues, related to things like cultural diversity, the global, and otherness" and "*a cultural repertoire performed by individuals* to deal with objects, experiences and people and which is encouraged by particular contexts, fusions of circumstance and motive, and frames of interpretation". These respondents' cosmopolitan experiences are shaped by the situations and contexts they are in and almost always are laden with dilemmas,

contradictions, ignorance, inclusion and exclusion, rejection and acceptance as well as being a strategy to negotiate their everyday lives away from home and being online. The theoretical framework, designed to capture everyday cosmopolitanism online, provided a specific analytical tool empowering the researcher to examine sensibilities and performance separately. Doing so allowed comprehensive research to be conducted as it is realised that sensibilities (thoughts and feelings) may well be extended without being acted openly to cultural others. Using the six dynamics: self-reflexivity; motivation; affordances and features; self-disclosure and self-censorship; collapsed contexts and audience, and privacy, this thesis is able to provide a different angle from which to analyse online cosmopolitanism. It is also through this framework, and the ethnographic approach employed, that this research was able to draw out specific situations, contexts, and matters where specific openness, tolerance and flexibility are expressed and acted upon. This framework also allows the respondents' individual and particular discursive resources to be elicited and the factors influencing actual performance of cosmopolitanism to be understood. Revisiting the discussion made on rooted Muslim cosmopolitanism will highlight the significance of these students' experiences of cosmopolitanism to the Malaysian cosmopolitanism and general cosmopolitanism discourses.

## **8.2. Revisiting Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism**

In the last two empirical chapters (six and seven) I have argued what the respondents experienced is a form of cosmopolitanism that is rooted in their

everyday experiences, their identity as Malay Muslims, and that the discursive resources they drew from are from Islamic teachings; a form of cosmopolitanism I labelled as Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism. Within the discussion of what Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism is, this author is engaged with a number of debates relevant to both Malaysian cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitanism discourse in general. Pertinent to the Malaysian cosmopolitanism discourse, I emphasised the need to study youth's (in the form of male and female international students) experiences, in an attempt to understand varied cosmopolitanism among Malaysians, rather than restricting cosmopolitan experiences to economic and political situations in the country and, in particular, of those economic middle class Malaysians. Looking beyond the national context, this thesis was able to examine different aspects of Malay Muslim Malaysian cosmopolitanism that are created, based on situations outside the country's economic and political situations. This group of international students' cosmopolitan experiences are rooted in their Malay Muslim identity, as well as the offline and online contexts they found themselves in, while they were physically absent from their home country. Such experiences were able to be captured by employing an ethnographic research approach, rather than depending on observation of the country's situation from far, as did those scholars who were critiqued in chapter two. For Malaysian Cosmopolitanism discourse, this thesis provided a different angle and an update of Malay Malaysian cosmopolitanism which could be useful for researchers, government bodies or the individuals themselves, to facilitate an understanding of the specific Malaysian cosmopolitanism, as both a concept and practice in the context of the Malay Malaysian experiences, for future benefit. This thesis however

should not be taken as a representation of the Malays in Malaysia, as this research did not aim to be a representation of such a group, but to provide a deeper understanding of an esoteric group of individuals' nuanced experiences.

Significant to the general cosmopolitanism discourse is this rooted Muslim cosmopolitanism discussion, that engages with the conceptualisation of cosmopolitanism itself; the call for rethinking of the previous fixed categorisation of an individual as cosmopolitan or un-cosmopolitan; and the analytical framework used in this research to study this very elusive concept. This analytical framework provides different analytical tools to separately study cosmopolitan sensibilities and cosmopolitan performance.

Let me first revisit the discussion made on the concept of cosmopolitanism, before revisiting the significance of the framework chosen to study everyday cosmopolitanism on Facebook. The last two empirical chapters call for the rethinking of the concept of cultural cosmopolitanism and its cosmopolitan actors. Cosmopolitanism is generally accepted as elusive, involving social interactions, engagements and openness that are extended to cultural others; for some scholars a cosmopolitan individual is rootless and not attached to any socio-cultural and/or religious identities. In this thesis, using the respondents' Rooted Muslim Cosmopolitanism, I argued for one: cosmopolitanism that is insular/inward. Also two: refusal to engage can be a cosmopolitan act; three: cosmopolitanism is not always about willingness to engage but a strategy; and finally fourth, that

performance of religiosity is not an indication that the performer is un-cosmopolitan.

Insular/Inward cosmopolitanism: cosmopolitanism can be insular (at times) in that cosmopolitan actors may not engage with those cultural others, but instead will engage predominantly with their own group. Being (seemingly) insular cannot be accepted as an indicator of how un-cosmopolitan a social actor is, due to the fact that an individual could be drawing from their social interactions with their own group in order to understand differences and similarities, which eventually become extended to those outside that own group. Recalling the argument made on temporal aspects of cosmopolitanism; an individual exhibiting a cosmopolitan character at one instance cannot always be labelled cosmopolitan, due to the changeability of their characters. An individual could exhibit, or not exhibit, a very cosmopolitan character at different times and in different contexts. I have argued that by acknowledging insular and inward cosmopolitanism we would be more sensitive to individual's actual grounded everyday experiences and contexts, rather than provide a general statement on outward (to other cultural groups) cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, this consideration of insular social interactions would sensitise researchers to other potential (temporary) cosmopolitan actors, those who do not quite fit the previous "cosmopolitan actor" category. In a similar vein, having a narrowed Facebook network is not an indication that an individual is parochial, seemingly unwilling to engage with cultural others, and hence un-cosmopolitan. In such a situation failing to engage with cultural others, or refusing to engage in a similar manner, cannot be placed in the un-cosmopolitan category as

it is arguable that (but to realise that) refusing to engage could also be a cosmopolitan act.

This brings me to the second point relevant to the cosmopolitanism concept: refusal to engage. The empirical chapters in this thesis have discussed the point that sometimes refusal to engage could be a cosmopolitan act, due to the fact that refraining self from engaging head-to-head with matters that might be sensitive or controversial is a cosmopolitan act; a tolerance expressed by refusal to engage and vice versa refusal to engage as tolerance. Here an individual is not endorsing what others have done but allowing other people to act according to their wish. I have also argued that it is not always easy to see the link between sensibilities and cosmopolitan performance. Cosmopolitanism is not necessarily performed but could remain as thoughts and feelings extended to others, as discussed in this thesis. Sensibilities, accepted as thoughts and feelings, cannot be seen by naked eyes but could only be perceived by personally asking the individual about what specific situations or matters does he / she find himself / herself expressing (mental) openness. Furthermore, the individual might have mentally engaged in the processes of negotiation and deliberation before performing a specific form of openness or before they came to the decision to not engage with others. This mental deliberation is inaccessible to others; a conclusion which again supports and justifies the use of interviews in this research and the specific analytical tools employed for assessing cosmopolitan sensibilities and performance. The respondents' constant negotiation and deliberation, as well as their refusal to

engage, bring us to another important point for cosmopolitanism: extending and performing openness is a strategy.

The last two empirical chapters of this thesis, in particular chapter seven, have discussed the idea of religion as an antithesis to cosmopolitanism. I have argued that despite the (act of) attachment to religion and the drawing upon religious teachings as discursive resources to deal with cultural differences, and whether to accept or reject cultural others, is in fact neither un-cosmopolitan nor parochial. This issue is discussed with reference to performance of religiosity addressed in chapter seven. What is interesting in this aspect of performance of religiosity is the apparent contradiction between being a Muslim and an “open” individual. For some respondents, presenting self as a Muslim almost always creates this idea of an individual as close-minded; hence, as discussed in chapter six, some respondents preferred to present themselves as a ‘good individual’ rather than a ‘Muslim individual’, so as to be socially accepted. There is also a group of respondents that does not see the presentation of a Muslim self as associated with being closed-minded.

These four points, argued in this thesis, call for the rethinking of the relationship between social interactions and cosmopolitanism, which potential future researchers can continue to work on. What this thesis has offered is an acknowledgment of the significance of studying online (and offline) everyday experiences in order to further understand cosmopolitanism as a concept, as well as the need to consider that online, Facebook, social interactions have become

both relevant and mundane in our everyday lives. Incorporating online experiences in the study of cosmopolitanism provides a comprehensive account of an individual's cosmopolitanism, considering that offline experiences are not actually detached from experiences gathered from online engagements. Such research that incorporates online experiences would also illuminate the extent played by new social media in creating a cosmopolitan culture and a cosmopolitan space. Research on cosmopolitanism in turn is also relevant to an online context as such knowledge allows us to further look into the significance and influence of being online, going online and users' experiences within. Further to this the findings of this research is valuable to the expansion of geographies of religion as I have mentioned in the previous chapter. Knowledge of the spatial performance of Muslim identity, in this case cosmopolitan identity is of a valuable contribution to this field.

The design of this research, particularly the methodology employed, allowed for the research questions to be answered and research objectives to be achieved. This thesis, by discussing the experiences of the UK-based Malay Malaysian students' everyday experiences, found that new social media, and particularly Facebook (a social network site), have the potential to cultivate cosmopolitanism. The site provides grounds for cosmopolitanism to be cultivated and to flourish but it is acknowledged that each individual's different contexts, circumstances, and frames of interpretation are shaping their own cosmopolitanism and the potential reach of the site. This chapter concludes that what this group of students experienced is a rooted Muslim cosmopolitanism, but this is not representative of all Malay Malaysians overseas or in Malaysia. This author also acknowledged the limitations



of this research; limitations which could be explored further by future research, details of which the next section will deliver.

### **8.3. Potential Future Research**

No research is without limitations, and this is acknowledged in this thesis. As written earlier, this thesis does not aim to offer a closure for this research on rooted to everyday (online) experiences of cosmopolitanism. What this thesis has offered, however, is a different angle from which to study this elusive cosmopolitanism concept for further exploration of Malaysian cosmopolitanism and general cosmopolitanism discourse. There are a number of points that this author has not incorporated in the research design which future research could pick up. Incorporating such omissions in future research would provide deeper and nuanced exploration of cultural cosmopolitanism and geography discipline in general.

One: this is a highly ethnicised study, as it focuses on a single ethnic group – Malay Malaysian: due to this it was unable to provide a cross-examination or comparison between different main ethnic groups' (Malay, Chinese, and Indian) cosmopolitanism. Although this is a highly ethnicised analysis it is not insignificant as it provides a deeper understanding of Malay Muslim (individual) cosmopolitanism as well as an update to the previous research on Malay Malaysian cosmopolitanism. However, incorporating different ethnic groups' experiences in future research could result in a detailed examination of cosmopolitanism

grounded in specific ethnic groups' contexts, situations, frames of interpretation and factors influencing their performance.

Two: during the fieldwork I realised that when I asked my respondents about openness, tolerance and flexibility they always referred to their experiences in the past rather than current or on-the-spot cosmopolitanism. Their answers, referring to the past, were very much due to the nature of the methods I employed in this research. Due to the emphasis I placed on eliciting their experiences, interviews were selected as one of the methods to obtain data. This particular method, the questions asked and the nature of cosmopolitanism itself (where sometimes we see an individual being open but at a different time and context exhibit a self that is seemingly "closed") placed the respondents in situations where they had to dig out their memories and recall the experiences they had. I foresee the academic contribution research could provide by tracking real-time cosmopolitan sensibilities and performance. Would it be possible to "follow" an individual and encounter such real-time cosmopolitanism? A long-term engagement and observation (with immediate access to respondents), arranged with potential respondents, would potentially allow such information to be obtained.

Three: gendered cosmopolitanism. This is another potential area to study within cultural (religious) cosmopolitanism. Are there any differences in the way males and females extend their openness? What contexts, situations or matters would males or females be more open about? Do they perform openness in similar ways? This research did not obtain significant differences in performance of openness, except

for the sartorial image some male respondents associated with presenting self as open, in contrast to the general female interviewees, who did not associate sartorial choice with openness. Future research could explore this further. There might also be significant gender differences in cosmopolitan sensibilities in different aspects that are worth investigating, which this research could have not covered due to a number of reasons for example its sample size.

Four: this research has focused on a group of students based in the UK and it is understood that their experiences offline and online are based on their host society's context and home contexts, replicated online and offline at the place where they study. Therefore, the forms of cosmopolitanism they experienced and exhibited are particular to where they currently are. Future research could look further into the forms of cosmopolitanism that such a group of international students would experience after returning home, when these students are placed in different contexts, situations and circumstances. A longitudinal research on cosmopolitanism would be useful in seeing the change and patterns in their behaviour and attitudes in relation to cultural openness. Research on those youths that have never left their home country would also be valuable to understand if such cosmopolitanism or any forms of cultural openness are felt and performed. In such research I could envisage further discussions on temporal and contextual aspects of cosmopolitanism and potentially on the influence that a dominant singular context (Malay Muslim or Malaysian) could have on a group of individuals.

Five: an advancement of geographies of religion and addition to literatures on Muslim identities by looking into performance of religiosity online especially in times when religious practices are increasingly becoming technologically mediated. Further to this is the research on individual user as religious agent outside the context of religious institutions. The findings of this research have highlighted the potential of online spaces as religious conduit and sharing of information that is user-driven. Future research on religious practices online could advance the field of geographies of religion. Islam and cosmopolitanism can also further this field of geographies of religion for instance by focusing specifically on Muslim cosmopolitanism and spatial/geographical enactment of Muslim cosmopolitan identity online and offline.

All in all, this section has provided five potential future research suggestions on cultural (religious) cosmopolitanism which researchers could pick up. I envisage on-going debate on cultural cosmopolitanism that further attempts to ground this elusive concept to individual's (online-offline) everyday experiences, however mundane and insignificant they may seem, and the incorporation of these potential research areas into future cosmopolitanism studies. It is hoped that this thesis, the discussion within and the self-reflexivity and dilemmas the author of this thesis has shared, will provide individuals (public) and researchers (academia) alike with a rich understanding of the nature of cultural cosmopolitanism and an appreciation that being on Facebook, going online, and being culturally open / close are acts that are not as simple as they seem, but are laden with a range of variables including:

emotions, dilemmas, contradictions, inclusion and exclusion, rejection and acceptance, contextual, situational, temporal and individual.

# Appendices

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## APPENDIX 1 – INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY (PILOT STUDY)



Department of Geography

Siti Mazidah Haji Mohamad (Mazidah)

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07760664834 (Mobile)

**Assalamualaikum and Salam Sejahtera,**

My name is Mazidah, a PhD research postgraduate under Department of Geography at Durham University. The study I will be conducting explores Malaysian youth's online and offline interactions and its link to youth's openness to others (i.e Race). This study involves analysing youth's activities and interactions within Facebook and to see how these are reflected by youth and brought forward into the offline (real life) environment. Through these interactions I would also like to see how participant's identity shift over time.

The study will be conducted using Qualitative research methods (see below) on youth aged from 18 to 34 years old.

- Focus group interviews,
  - Group of 5 – 7 people discussing the topics prepared by researcher in an informal setting.
- Diary taking,

- Participants to be given 1 set of notebook to take note of their daily activities and their reflections on their online and offline interactions.
- Participation observation
  - Researcher is to be part of participants' daily life online and offline. It will involve researcher being in participants' Facebook to understand and analyse participants' interactions.
- In-depth interviews
  - One to One interview that will draw information from focus group interviews and/or diary taking and/or participation observation, participants' experiences and to discuss participants' Facebook statuses.

I will also provide participants with a set of guidelines and instructions on the focus groups interviews, diary taking, participation observation and in-depth interviews, prior to the start of each activity. This information sheet comes with the Informed Consent Form which participants are asked to read and sign prior to joining the study.

Please take note that audio recording and note taking will be conducted throughout the study. Participants have the right to refuse any form of recording by researcher. This study is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw at any stages of the study.

Please do not hesitate to contact (contact details provided above) me if you have any enquiries regarding this study.

I thank you in advance for your time and support.

Warmest Regards,

Mazidah

## APPENDIX 2 – INFORMED CONSENT FORM (PILOT STUDY)



Department of Geography

Beyond Ethno-Cultural Identification: Malaysian Youth Rediscovering and Renegotiating their Identities in a Cosmopolitan Society through Social Network Sites (SNSs)

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This consent form lists the process of the study, matters regarding confidentiality issues, and dissemination of research findings. Before signing this form, please consider the following points:

1. A focus group interview will be conducted with other 5-7 participants. In any case where participants feel uncomfortable sharing their experiences in a group, participants have the right to withdraw at any stages of the study and will not be required to provide an explanation for withdrawing.
2. Participants are given the right to select which type of activities (focus group session and/or in-depth interview) they would want to contribute to.
3. Upon request, researcher will provide participants copies of the audio recorded in-depth interviews.
4. All participants' names and details will be made anonymous and confidential by the researcher.
5. Participants will be presented with the end report of the findings with an opportunity for further discussion.

By signing this form, I confirm that I have voluntarily agreed to participate in this study. I have been briefed about the study prior to the study being conducted and I have read the important points listed in this form.

Participant's Name:

Participant's Signature:

Researcher's Signature:

Date:



**APPENDIX 3 – RESEARCHER’S PROMPTS AND QUESTIONS FOR SEMI-  
STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**



**Department of Geography**

**Beyond Ethno-Cultural Identification: Malaysian Youth Rediscovering and  
Renegotiating their Identities in a Cosmopolitan Society through a Social Network**

**Site (SNS)**

**Draft of Topics and Questions for Focus Group/Interview Participants**

**Set A – Facebook Usage?**

- How long have you been using Facebook?
- What are your feelings about Facebook?
- What it could do for you? What has it done for you?
- Types of activities undertaken in Facebook? (Status updates, Commenting, Messaging)
- Passive (lurking – checking newsfeed, moving from one profile to another) and Active (messaging, commenting, “Like” updates, discussion) Engagement?

**Set B – Facebook Interactions?**

- Do you interact with specific friends or groups of friends in Facebook?
- Do you put friends in different groups? Close Friends, School Friends, Work Colleagues, Family,
- What criteria were used to group them? Level of openness and closeness in terms of privacy settings?

- Geographical location of friends: local area (neighbourhood, school, workplace), national (states in Malaysia), global (other countries worldwide). Participants' "Where My Friends Be?" map will be used to show the geographical distribution of friends and facilitate discussion on the topic.
- How often do you interact with friends outside the local area and racial groups?

**Set C – Meaning of Facebook Interactions? Link to offline environment.**

- Do you see yourself in Facebook to be different from your personality offline?
- What meanings do you attach to your Facebook interactions? Do they influence your offline relationship and social lives? If they do, how do they influence your offline environment?
- Do you feel that your active or passive engagements in Facebook have opened up your views and feelings towards others? Ability to understand others more?

**Other Points – Prime Minister Najib Razak and 1Malaysia.**

- Do you visit Malaysian's politician Facebook Fan page? (for example Prime Minister Najib Razak's)
- How do you feel about 1Malaysia that he introduced when he first came to Office? One of his main aims is to create a multi racial Malaysia. What do you think of this?
- How successful do you think this 1Malaysia would be in reducing division between racial groups?
- What do you feel about racial tension in Malaysia? In which part of social lives is this tension more apparent?
- Reflecting back on your Facebook interactions, do you think being in Facebook has had any influence on how you feel about people coming from different racial background?

## APPENDIX 4 – DESCRIPTION OF FACEBOOK FEATURES

FEATURES	DESCRIPTION
<b><i>Profile (Wall or Timeline)</i></b>	It is a collection of user life events. It contains the user profile picture, cover photo, updates and sharing, basic information, photo album.
<b><i>Profile Pictures</i></b>	It allows users to upload photo of themselves for others users to see and recognise who the account belongs to. Profile Pictures on the wall are visible to public but the settings could be changed to control access to the Profile Pictures album. This is usually the first step to “friend” someone.
<b><i>Cover Photo</i></b>	It is the photo on the top of the page. It is open to public even though user’s profile is limited to Friends or Friends of Friends. Facebook found the use of cover photo improving the experience of other users viewing the profile. Having unique cover photo such as photos from events in user’s life makes the profile more unique. It is also a space to show one’s real identity (Facebook Help Center, 2013a).

<b>Photo Album</b>	<p>Similar to the album we have offline. It offers flexibility in access to the album, rearranging photos, moving photos to other albums, renaming title and subtitle of the album. Recently the photo album could be tagged with other users and places.</p>
<b>Like</b>	<p>It is a way to give positive feedback to other users' updates. This is use on Friends' updates such as status, photos, links they shared on the page, comments left on Friends' Wall or Timeline. According to Facebook, it "is a way to give positive feedback or to connect with things you care about on Facebook. You can like content that your friends post to give them feedback or like a Page that you want to connect with on Facebook. You can also connect to content and Pages through social plugins or advertisements on and off Facebook" (Facebook Help Center, 2013b).</p>
<b>Chat</b>	<p>Introduced in 2008 and was upgraded with video calling capabilities in 2011. It allows one on one or group chats in a private space that only the recipients or groups of users could see the conversation.</p>

<b>Group</b>	It is a page created by users based on association, affiliation or sharing interest. There are many types of groups available in Facebook such as Student groups, Mothers groups, Family groups. It can be open or closed groups depending on the administrator or members' preference. Photos, events, and posts could be shared in these groups.
<b>Events</b>	Events are used to create gatherings or events online, manage invitations, and keeping up to date with people invited. Events do not necessarily be gatherings conducted offline, they could also be an invitation to activities happening online. Commonly used by groups to set up event, invite members and to disseminate information and updates of the event created.
<b>Messages (Inbox)</b>	It allows private messages to be sent to individual or group of friends. It is now linked with Chat feature. Whatever is sent to Chat is automatically directed to Messages which could be viewed later if users are away from their Facebook. It allows both synchronous and asynchronous messages to be sent.
<b>Newsfeed (Home)</b>	Allow users to see updates from Friends. Any new postings, likes, uploads will be available on the Newsfeed. It allows users to keep track of their Friends' activities without going to their profile page or Timeline.

<b>Facebook Mobile</b>	It is a Facebook standalone application for smartphones, tablets, and other phones. It provides user access to their Facebook wherever they go without having to use a desktop or laptop.
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## APPENDIX 5A – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS – UNDERGRADUATE

NO.	NAME	AGE-GROUP	GENDER	INTERVIEW	FACEBOOK USER SINCE
1	Joyce	20 – 24	F (Chinese)	Face to Face	N/A
2	Chin Li	20 – 24	F (Chinese)	Face to Face	N/A
3	Farid**	20 – 24	M	Skype	2009
4	Ali	20 – 24	M	Face to Face	2007
5	Christopher	20 – 24	M (Chinese)	Face to Face	2007
6	Shikin	20 – 24	F	E-mail	2009
7	Mei Lian	15 – 19	F (Chinese)	Face to Face	2011/2012*
8	Erna	20 – 24	F	Face to Face	2007
9	Nabila	20 – 24	F	Skype	2008
10	Abir	20 – 24	F	Skype	2008
11	Ilham	20 – 24	F	Skype	2008
12	Nurhafizah	20 – 24	F	Skype	2008
13	Syam	20 – 24	F	Skype	2008
14	Izzah	20 – 24	F	Skype	2008
15	Nurul	20 – 24	F	Skype	2008
16	Sharifah	20	F	Skype	2008

**APPENDIX 5B – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS – POSTGRADUATE**

<b>NO.</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGE- GROUP</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>INTERVIEW</b>	<b>FACEBOOK USER SINCE</b>
1	Amal**	25 – 29	F	Face to Face	2007
2	Hafizah**	30 – 34	F	Face to Face	N/A
3	Shifa	30 – 34	F	Face to Face	N/A
4	Hanira	30 – 34	F	Face to Face	N/A
5	Ahmad**	40	M	Skype	N/A
6	Luqman**	25 – 29	M	Face to Face	2007
7	Shukie	20 – 24	F	Face to Face	N/A
8	Sabrina	25 – 29	F	Skype	2009
9	Sharifah	25 – 29	F	Skype	N/A
10	Nora**	30 – 34	F	Skype	2011
11	Husna	20 – 24	F	Face to Face	2008
12	Syazreen	20 – 24	F	Face to Face	2007
13	Mai	41	F	Skype	2008
14	Ayu	25 – 29	F	Skype	2008
15	Sharina	25 – 29	F	Skype	2007
16	Mohamad**	25 – 29	M	Face to Face	2007



## APPENDIX 5B – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS – POSTGRADUATE

(CONTINUATION)

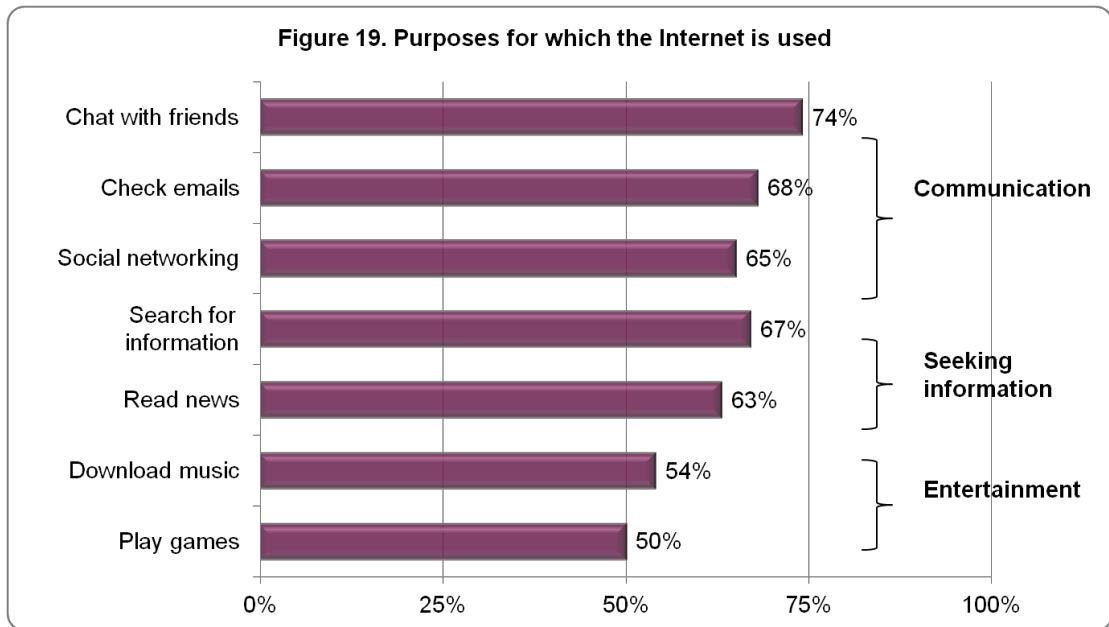
NO.	NAME	AGE-GROUP	GENDER	INTERVIEW	FACEBOOK USER SINCE
17	Razali**	25 – 29	M	Face to Face	2008/2009*
18	Zainal**	25 – 29	M	Face to Face	N/A
19	Diana	25 – 29	F	Face to Face	2008
20	Adilla	25 – 29	F	Skype	2007
21	Nawwar	20 – 24	F	Skype	2008
22	Norhayu	25 – 29	F	Skype	2010
23	Balqies	25 – 29	F	Skype	2008
24	Nasaruddin	40	M	Face to Face	2008

\* Participant is not sure the exact year he signed up for a Facebook profile.

\*\* Pseudonym

Note: Due to the intensive use of interview excerpts of some of the participants throughout this thesis, their name has been changed to avoid being identified as they use their real name for their Facebook Profile.

## APPENDIX 6



**Figure 4 Purposes for which Internet is used. Source: The Youth Factor - 2012 Survey of Malaysian Youth Opinion (fig. 19, p 24).**

## APPENDIX 7



Figure 5 Snapshot of a photo upload on Facebook showing a new book titled 'Eruption of Facebook, between Divine Rewards and Sins'. Source: iluvislam Facebook Page, 2012.

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