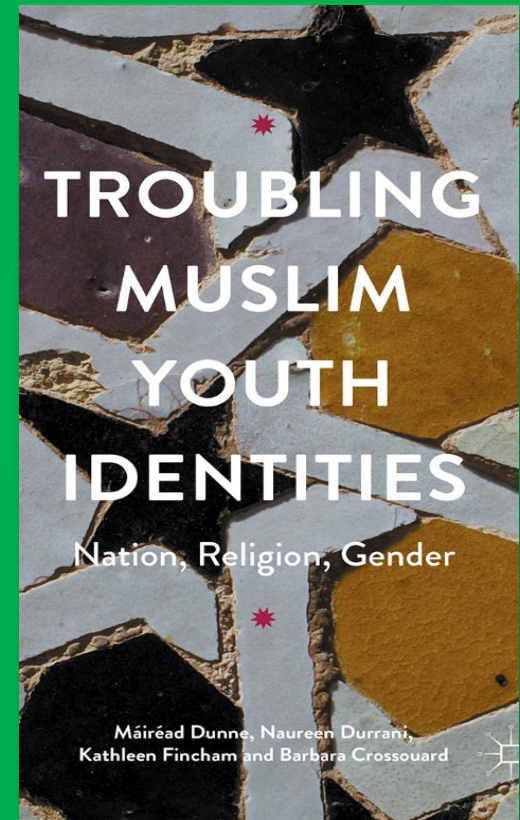


Troubling Muslim Youth Identities: Nation, Religion, Gender

Máiréad Dunne, Naureen Durrani,
Kathleen Fincham, Barbara Crossouard



Presentation overview



Introduction to the book

Professor Máiréad Dunne

**Contexts –
geographies and histories**

Dr Naureen Durrani

**Methodology –
researching youth in context**

Dr Kathleen Fincham

Key research insights

Dr Barbara Crossouard

**Conclusions
Invitation for comments and
questions**

Professor Máiréad Dunne

Why this research?

- ▶ To **disrupt** stereotypes and '**trouble**' dominant discourses about Muslim youth
- ▶ Its **contextual salience** in times of heightened fears and anxieties about
 - ▶ Youth / religious fundamentalism / conflict esp. in the Global South.
- ▶ To explore **youth identity narratives**,
 - ▶ at the intersections of **national, religion and gender**
 - ▶ their axes of affiliation and difference
 - ▶ the interpenetration of local and global
- ▶ To provide space for the **views of youth**, within their own local and postcolonial contexts and address the **paucity of in-depth research** especially in nations of Global South.

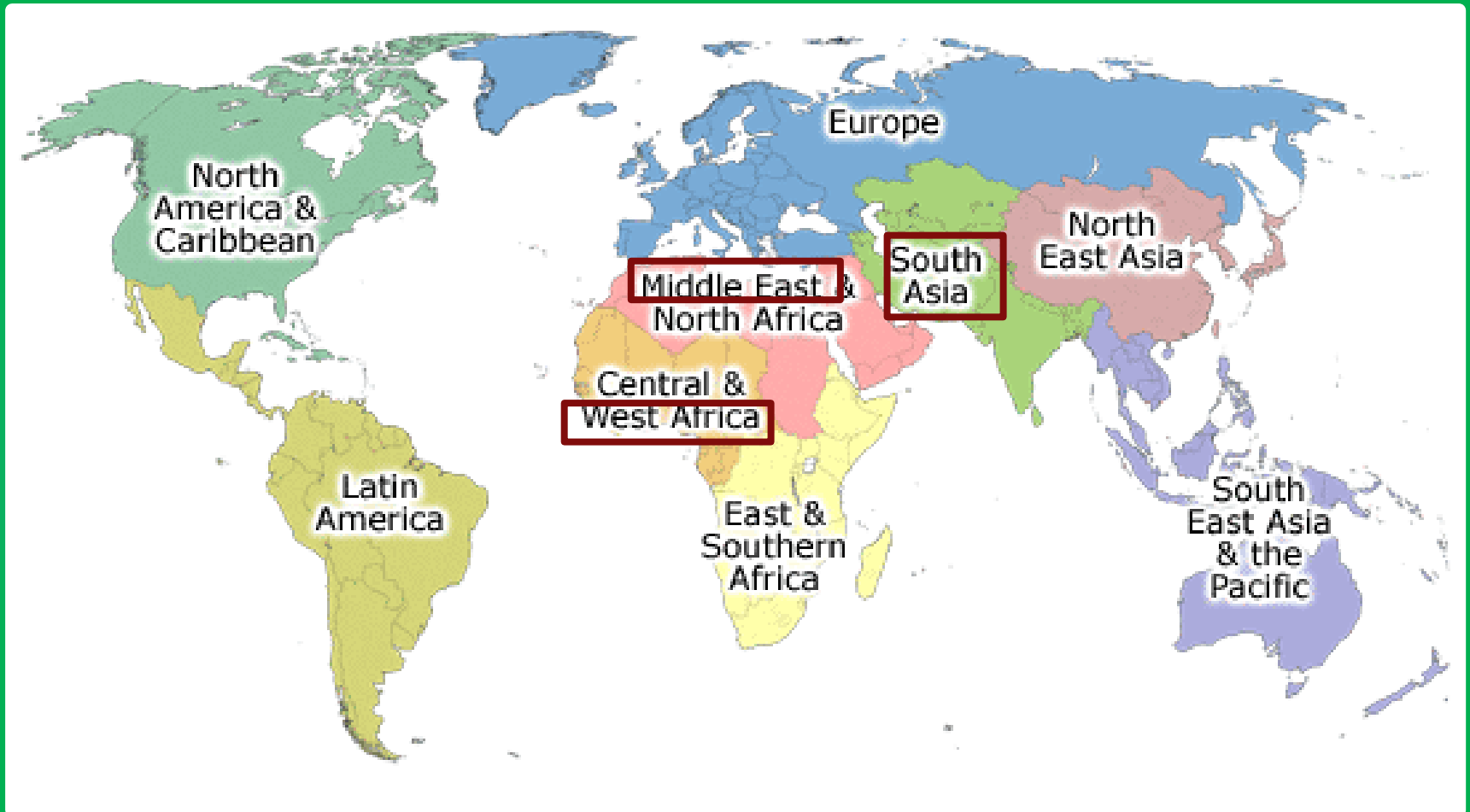
Theoretical troubling

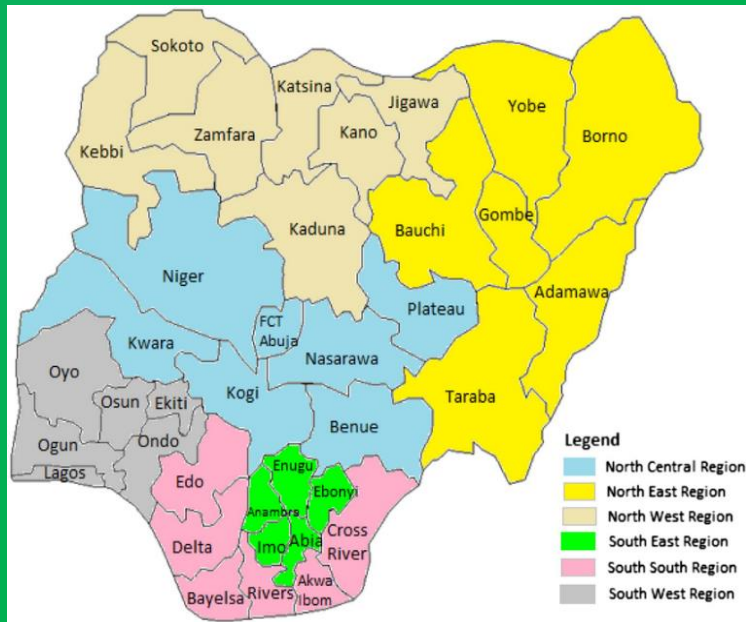
- ▶ **Undoing dominant discourses / frames of reference by:**
 - ▶ Shifting the analytical frame with feminist/ poststructural and postcolonial theories
 - ▶ Moving away from universalising & homogenising discourses to focus on the local and contextually specific identity narratives.
- ▶ **Mapping the geographies of youth identity especially,**
 - ▶ intersections of nation, religion and gender
 - ▶ entanglements of affect, affiliation and difference
- ▶ **Understanding youth identities and allegiances by**
 - ▶ resisting essentialising
 - ▶ understanding how they are infused by historical and socio-political traces
 - ▶ exploring fractures immanent in their postcolonial contexts

Troubling - nation, religion, gender

- ▶ **Tracing the ways that historical discourses of nation are invoked by youth in claiming their national identity**
 - ▶ Distinction from **external others** including colonizing states
 - ▶ Distinction from **internal others** reflecting the scars of national formation through ethnic/ regional / religious difference
- ▶ **Understanding the specific ways that Islam was**
 - ▶ embodied and practiced in the everyday lives of youths.
 - ▶ entangled with nation and gender
- ▶ **Exploring the 'doing' of gender**
 - ▶ in different locales
 - ▶ within national and religious identity narratives
 - ▶ in producing particular gender positionings and regulative strategies

Contexts: 4 countries 3 world regions





State histories

- ▶ All are new nations
- ▶ Post-colonial states – different constitutions
 - ▶ Ex-British colonies: Pakistan & Nigeria
 - ▶ Ex-French colonies: Lebanon & Senegal
- ▶ Fragility and conflict at independence and after

	Pakistan	Senegal	Nigeria	Lebanon
Independence (year)	1947	1960	1960	1943
Fragile States ranking (2015) (/178)	13	60	14	41

Populations

- ▶ Muslim majority – but different types of Islam which shape
 - ▶ state organisation /governance
 - ▶ national imaginaries
- ▶ High proportions of youth
- ▶ Gender inequalities

	Pakistan	Senegal	Nigeria	Lebanon
Total population (2016) (000)	188,144	14,967	183,523	5,054
Muslim population (%)	96	94	50	54
Youth population (15-24yrs) (%)	21.5	20.5	19.3	17.2
Gender Ranking (/145)	144	72	125	138

Methodology

Qualitative approach:

- ▶ engaging with youth in focus groups discussions,
- ▶ working with local /youth researchers
- ▶ observations in the research context

Researchers:

- ▶ all with previous empirical research experience with youth in the respective country contexts
- ▶ each team member responsible for one country case study

Research process:

Collaborative

- ▶ pre-fieldwork: clarification of research aims and structure, development of research instruments, ethical approval, participant info and consent
- ▶ post-fieldwork: discussion and refinement of analyses; exploration of commonalities and differences within and across cases, drafting and commenting on writing

Individual

- ▶ data gathering, preliminary analysis, write up of country cases

	Pakistan	Senegal	Nigeria	Lebanon	TOTAL
FGDs	13	18	17	10	58
Youth (n)	65	75	78	58	276
Female	28	35	44	31	138
Male	37	40	34	27	138
Muslim	60	47	45	52	204
Christian	5	28	33	6	72
Age range	19-28	16-35	18-36	16-24	16-36
Mean age	23	24	24	19	

Data collection

Bio-sheet:

- ▶ socio-demographic characteristics of participants translated into French, Arabic, Urdu, Hausa and other relevant local languages

FGDs:

- ▶ 4-6 participants per FG segregated by gender / religion
- ▶ A generic interview schedule focusing mainly on youth views of nationality, religion, ethnicity, gender and their intersections
- ▶ Supported by local researchers and conducted in locally used languages
- ▶ Recorded and transcribed
- ▶ Local researcher accounts of the FGDs and the key issues discussed

Participants:

- ▶ selected in each country based on religion, gender and age
- ▶ education institutions as the main point of access to youth

Analysis

- ▶ Descriptive analysis of the bio-sheet data
- ▶ **Read and re-read** the FGDs and local researcher accounts.
- ▶ **Reading and comparing** participant responses to key questions (e.g. who is an ideal citizen? Is this different for females and males ?)
- ▶ **Highlighting the debates** between FG participants noting what is assumed and what is contentious in the specific context
- ▶ Through **an iterative approach** organise and collect the responses around the main themes of nation, religion and gender through our theoretical lens
- ▶ Looking for other emerging themes **map the youth narratives of identity** and the intersections between them in each context.

Muslim youth's national identities

- Youth expressed **strong attachments** to their nation
- **Strong commitment** to democratic values - but critical of politicians' failure to deliver
- **External others** integral to the (relatively unified) national imaginaries of youth in Pakistan and Senegal
- **Internal others** significant in the more fractured national imaginaries of Nigeria and Lebanon
- **Powerfully** infused by historical traces:
 - *struggles for independence*
 - *Internal fractures originating in colonial times, often involving differentiations based in religion*



Muslim youth's religious identities

- ▶ The **most important** axis of youth's identities in all four contexts
- ▶ Islam was about **peace, harmony, toleration** – youth vehemently rebutted the association of their Islam with terrorism and religious 'fundamentalism'
- ▶ Youth's religious values **aligned well** with their democratic values
- ▶ Youth's religious and national identities were **closely entwined**



Religious Identities

- ▶ **Multiplicities** of youth's expressions of their religious identities – **not homogeneous**
- ▶ **Socio-historical traces** reverberated through youth's religious allegiances /boundaries
- ▶ **Pakistan** – youth's pure form of Sunni Islam was intrinsic to their national belongings
- ▶ **Senegal** – the diversities of its Sufi *African Islam* was seen as a marker of distinction
- ▶ **Nigeria** – youth claims to '*proper Islam*' bound up with articulation of regional and ethnic differences between North and South
- ▶ **Lebanon** – with religious differences sedimented in its constitution, Shi'a youth defined themselves against both Sunni and Christian others
- ▶ Awareness of (and resistance to) the **politicisation** of Islam



Gender *untroubled*?

- ▶ Youth's national and religious identities were established and stabilised through **gender**, framed in terms of male/female, heteronormative binaries
 - ▶ **Males:** breadwinners, defenders of the family and the nation, figures of authority
 - ▶ **Females:** wives, mothers, caring, modest, pure, confined to the private sphere
- ▶ These powerful gender hierarchies were deeply entangled with local cultures and historical narratives
- ▶ The revivification of these entanglements rendered it particularly difficult to contest such hierarchies



Troubling gender hierarchies?

- ▶ Gender as a **site of struggle**
- ▶ Any troubling of gender hierarchies mainly voiced by youth in higher education
- ▶ Islamic texts/codes were drawn upon to affirm but also to **challenge** gender hierarchies
- ▶ Used by female youth especially to contest their gendered positioning
- ▶ Arguments for gender equality could nevertheless be rebutted as culturally inauthentic / anti-religious
- ▶ Gender equality destabilises imaginaries of nation and religion and can provoke resistance and entrenchment

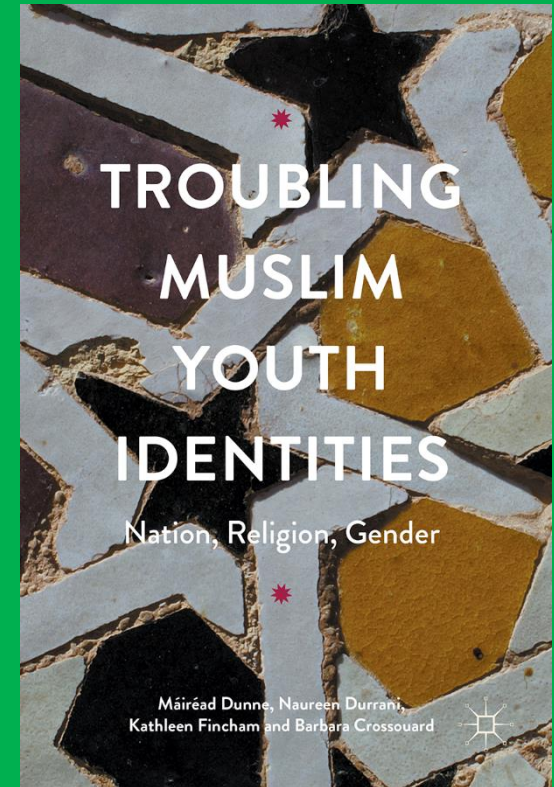


Conclusions

- ▶ **Refutation** of trajectories of development as understood in **modernisation theory**
- ▶ **Rejection** of some understandings of **secularity as a hallmark of development** and of democratic societies
- ▶ **Recognition** of the importance of **history and socio-political dynamics** in producing allegiances/ differences
- ▶ **Importance of the local** in the production of identity and in the intersections of nation, religion and gender
- ▶ **Significance of gender** within identity imaginaries
- ▶ **Challenges to understandings of gender and Muslim youth identities and allegiances** as well as notions of **citizenship** in development and education discourses and policies

Thank you

- ▶ Over to you!
- ▶ Questions and comments welcome



Order the book online at <http://bit.ly/2faeork>