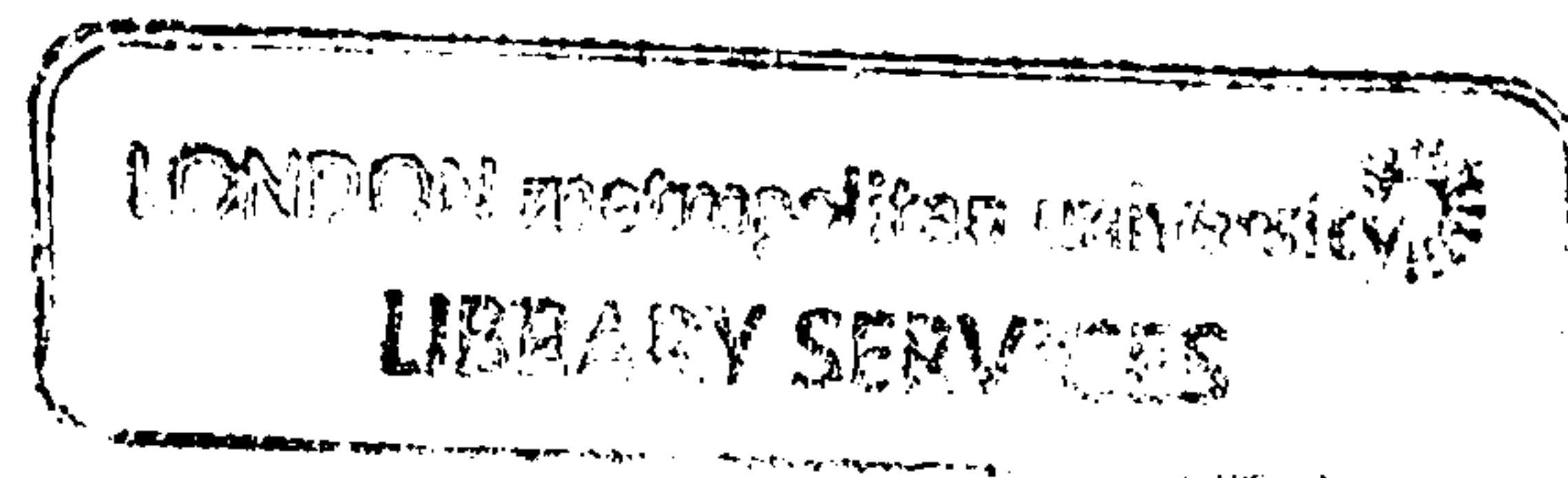


# **Second Generation South Asian Muslims' Conceptualisations of Religious and Ethnic Identity**



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## ABSTRACT

Muslims have, in recent years, become the focus of political and social interest on a global scale. Protests against events such as the Gulf War and the Rushdie Affair have served to highlight in the media and popular consciousness that young Asian Muslims are perhaps not as 'passive and obedient' as was previously thought. In addition to this, young Muslim South Asians are the fastest growing demographic group in Britain today and being located, for the most, at or near the bottom of the social structural hierarchy presents sociologists with a considerable challenge to study the phenomenon of young south Asian Muslims conceptualisation of their place within British society.

It is with these particular issues in mind that the thesis will address the following questions. How do young South Asian Muslims find their place within British society? How can the indigenous population understand the particular issues? how can we theorise this phenomenon and what does it say about the state of sociological explanations of Muslims in Britain today?

Here, I examine the nature of identity, how it is constructed and what it means in practice for second generation South Asian Muslims. I will describe, explain and theorise the nature of this identity construction and the effect the self-conceptualisation of identity has on the lives of second generation South Asian Muslims in Britain.

I have used ethnographic techniques to 'get under the skin' of this group and give them a chance to describe their own lives and how they feel about being British, Asian and Muslim. I also highlight how their ethnicity and religion form a central part of their 'self', that this is mediated through global and local flows, how the research subject's are orientated to particular forms of religious practice on the one hand and how some of them come to undergo a degree of ethnic effacement.



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## GLOSSARY

Ayat	Sentence/verse from the Koran
Burqua	Loose garment, with veiled eyeholes, covering the whole body, worn in public by Muslim women.
Dupatta	A silk or muslin shawl or headscarf.
Eid	Religious festival of which there are two a year (in the Islamic calendar)
Eisha	The final prayer of the day
Fard	Compulsory act as mentioned in the Koran
Fatwa	A formal legal opinion or decision issued by a Muslim judicial authority, e.g. that someone should die or be killed; (non-Muslim) ultimate sanctions, sentence of death
Halal	To slaughter according to Muslim law; that which Muslims may lawfully do
Haldi	Turmeric
Haram	Anything forbidden
Hijab	A covering for a Muslim woman's head and face, sometimes reaching the ground.
Hizb-ut-Tahrir	An extreme right wing political group.
Imam Baragh	Shiite Mosque
IR	Instrumental rationalists
Jamaat-i-Islami	A political party
Jinn	Mythical being, angel, devil
Jumma	Friday (Friday congregation prayers)



Kaaba	The cube-shaped holy building at Mecca into which the Black Stone is built, which Muslims face towards when they pray.
Kaffir	Non-believer
Khutum	Finish/ end of
Kicheree	Mixture/ hybrid
Kismet	Fate, destiny
Koranic	Of the Koran
Kuffr	Forbidden act
Madarsah	Religious School
Maulvi	Muslim Cleric
Moharram	The first month of the Muslim year; a great fast in commemoration of Hassan and Hossain (grandsons of Mohammed) during its first ten days; a public procession during the fast.
Munafiq	Lapsed believer
Namaz / Salat	Prayer (one of the five daily prayers of Fajr, Zuhr, Asr. Maghrib and Eisha)
Pak/ na-pak	Clean / Unclean
Paki	Racial insult
Purdah	Concealment, confinement
Rishta	Proposal for marriage
Rizq	Food
Roze	Fasting
Salaam	A word and gesture of salutation in the East, chiefly among Muslims
Sayed	A group who claim direct descent from the Prophet Muhammad



SGSAM	Second generation South Asian Muslim
Shalwar kameez	Loose tunic and trousers worn by women and men
Sharia	The body of Islamic religious law.
Sunnat	The traditional root of Muslim law, based on biographical stories about Muhammad, constituting a secondary source of revelation to that which is written down in the Koran.
Sylhet	Province in Bangladesh
Ummah	Muslim community
Umrah	Pilgrimage to Mecca, not the Hajj, which is the once in a lifetime compulsory pilgrimage.
VR	Value rationalists
Wadu	Ritual ablutions before prayer
Zakat	Compulsory annual giving to charity of 2.5% of excess personal wealth.



## **CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION**

### **THE ISSUES**

This thesis is based upon an ethnographic study of 'second-generation' South Asian<sup>1</sup> Muslim students at the London Guildhall University. South Asian youth, in general, have been characterised as belonging to close knit families and communities, where they are well behaved and show deference to their parents and authority. In addition to this they are said to have issues with 'fitting in' to the wider community as a result of the mismatch between their 'home culture' and wider society. Simply stated, they are seen as being caught between two cultures (Ballard & Ballard, 1977; Khan, 1977). In particular, their religion, Islam, is seen, if not as a problem, then as an issue which somehow prevents them fully integrating.

South Asian Muslims are on the receiving end of much racism, criticism, and misapprehension. This is inter-linked with their place in modern British history and their relationships to 'empire' (Modood, 1992). Young Muslims from East Asia (Malaysia or Indonesia), for instance, while an interesting group, do not have a 'fundamentalist' label applied to them in the same way that South Asians do. East Asian youths for instance were not, in the main, participants in the Bradford 'book burning' (1989), have not been excluded from school, murdered on the streets or had their homes set ablaze. A social and political context sets South Asians apart from all other Muslim groups in Britain, and this is why, they are of particular interest for this thesis.

### **BRITAIN AS A SECULAR STATE AND ISLAM AS A MINORITY RELIGION**

It is perceived by social scientists that Britain is undergoing a process of secularisation. This is characterised by falling attendance in Christian Churches and by a wider general decline in religious belief (Bruce, 1995). It has been argued that (Dobbelaere, 1985; Lechner, 1991; Wilson, 1982) within Europe, there is a process of secularisation taking place which implies that religious institutions, actions and consciousness are losing their social significance and importance, especially in the day-to-day lives of people (Wilson, 1982). Furthermore, secularisation theory

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<sup>1</sup>Those students whose parents; country of origin is either India, Pakistan or Bangladesh.



suggests that church attendance is falling and the power of religion in public and private life is declining in significance. There is no doubt that this is case with Christians as is highlighted in the 17<sup>th</sup> report of the British Social Attitudes which shows how between 1989 and 1995 each of the established Christian churches recorded a decline in membership (De Graf & Need, 2000). For 'other religions' however, between the same years there was a 3% rise in religious membership. This picture points to minority ethnic religions, such as Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism growing in significance for South Asians, and this is particularly the case for this study of South Asian Muslims.

Demographically, Islam in Britain, is a minority religion, with 1.2-1.4 million adherents, of whom, 65%-75% are of South Asian origin (Scott, Pearce, & Goldblatt, 2000). The interesting thing to note is that South Asians, in general, have a lower than average age than the indigenous population. For instance, the median age for white British people is 37 years old, while for Indians the figure is 31, Pakistanis, 22 and Bangladeshis, 18 (Scott et al., 2000). Thus the fertility rates especially for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are significantly higher than for other ethnic groups as reflected in the high proportion of children under 15 (Scott et al., 2000).

This, together with the fact that the university attracts a significant number of students of South Asian origin, is why I decided to approach the issue of religious and ethnic identity amongst this group. I also wanted to investigate how the nature of religiosity was changing for a 'second' generation. How different was it for this generation compared to that of their parents? What effect did the home atmosphere or culture have on their daily lives? Moreover, how did they negotiate living in a white, nominally Christian society?

## **HOW THE STUDY AROSE AND THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research was funded as a three-year studentship at London Guildhall to research the sociology of South Asian religions in Britain. Within this stipulation, I decided to study the university's Muslim students for the following reasons; first, the Islamic Society within the university was becoming more influential and visible within the student body. It ran high profile campaigns on issues such as getting a dedicated prayer room and distributing anti-gay and anti-Israel literature as well as



promoting Islam within the student body. Because of the above campaigns, the Islamic Society (and by association, Muslim students who were activists) developed a reputation as irrational 'fundamentalists' and became even more marginalised than before. A particular incident illustrates this well. During the 1994-1995 academic year in the student common room, a condom full of beer thrown by a member of the Rugby Club hit (inadvertently) a female Muslim student, which led to protests from the Muslim society. This together with input from Hizb-ut-Tahrir<sup>2</sup> student members culminated in the one-day closure of the Aldgate campus. It had an important effect on the perception of not only the Islamic society but also of Muslims in general. Second, anyone who observed Muslims over the past decade or so could not have failed to notice an increase in the number of young women wearing the Muslim hijab or men sporting a beard or some other dress (such as a prayer cap), which marks them out as a Muslim. While there may be an increase in the number of South Asian students entering the university, this does not explain the rise in the apparent religious symbolism on display within the university. One has to go elsewhere for explanations. It was an interest in Muslim identity, especially amongst South Asian youth that led to me to examine this sociologically ignored group. These undergraduates were developing an increasingly high profile, were potentially upwardly mobile and would be entering the world of work as the second generation of Asian Muslims. There was a self-perception that they were members of a vilified and misunderstood social group.

These factors led me to investigate the extent to which the sense of identity amongst South Asian undergraduates was problematic. What were the processes of identity formation, and what were the sociological and religious factors at work? This led to an examination and analysis of how forms of identity are constructed.

## **AIMS OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the research is to show how second generation South Asian students perceive their lives and construct their ethnic and religious identity, in Britain, within the context of their ascribed and constructed religious, cultural, and socio-economic background. For example, I will examine what the students see as their social role in British society; whether they feel that they can fully participate in 'British culture' or

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<sup>2</sup> A radical/militant extreme right wing Islamist organisation



whether there are social boundaries that limit their lives. This will be related to notions of religious, cultural, and ethnic identities. In particular I will be looking at the importance of religion in this process. What effect, if any, does an orientation towards 'fundamentalism' or 'secularism' have on their concept of themselves, their ethnicity and identity? I will also be looking at how their degree of religiosity or their relationship to Islam affects their orientation to particular forms of action and religious practice.

The main thrust of the research is to describe, interpret and explain what is happening to the sampled group in terms of religious and ethnic identity. The data generated and its subsequent analysis will help in this examination. It will contribute to the explanation of how current globalisation theories and the processes in the construction of religious, ethnic, and cultural identity, are working on the ground with reference to this particular group. It will provide an illustration of the dynamics of religion and modernity in the construction of identity and culture of one of the fastest growing groups in terms of population in Britain today.

## **METHODOLOGICAL TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED**

The aim of this study was to find out answers to these questions using empirical ethnographic methods of overt participant observation and unstructured interviews. The questions posed at the start of the research essentially directed me to these techniques. I felt that through ethnography that questions and issues of religious and ethnic identity, self-perception and personal ontological security could be best examined and explained. Ethnography allows the comparison of experiences and thoughts of the research participants who were subject to broadly similar influences. In particular, getting to know the social setting that the students inhabit within the university, the places they frequent, what their collective activities are and what issues of the day are important in their student lives. This was explored through overt participant observation. It is from here that I started to become aware of the issues that they faced on a daily basis and what it may be like to be a South Asian Muslim student at London Guildhall University. I felt that positivist techniques, while useful, would not get to the core of what the students perceived to be the issues and processes that are central to explaining their identities. The location of the study, in the areas that students frequented, i.e. common rooms, prayer meetings, activists'



meetings served to provide a contextual background to the space they occupied, and the struggles they had in gaining some degree of legitimacy to their presence as an organised group within the university.

The data generated through participant observation and unstructured interview were analysed using the method of grounded theory (B Glaser, 1978; B Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1970; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1997). This allowed the management of large amounts of data and provided a method for the generating theory that was ‘grounded’ within the data, and therefore the experiences of the students. Ethnographic methods can play an important part in developing and testing macro theories (Hammersley, 1992). This was the case here, in that the theory generated from the data was used to examine to what degree globalisation theory could be applied to this group (Giddens, 1993).

The grounded theory approach encouraged me to examine the personal, domestic and local context and influences of the students, but this method did not allow me to examine the political and social context on a wider scale than that of their local and personal spheres. Thus, Giddens’ theory of globalisation was introduced to help to relate the wider structural forces to the specific contexts and situations in which identity formulation and management took place.

## **CONTENTIOUS DESCRIPTIVE TERMINOLOGY**

The terms I have used within this study are somewhat contentious. During the course of the study, it became clear that descriptor terms such as British-Asian, British and Muslim-British are terms that the students are still grappling with. Therefore, as an overall descriptive term, I have used South Asian Muslim, because they all originate from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh, and, that they all describe themselves as Muslim. The term ‘Asian’, has common meaning in popular parlance but, within this context, is misleading as it could be used as a descriptor for anyone who originates from the continent of Asia.

Second generation is the other key term. It refers to students whose fathers, and then mothers, migrated to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s (the first generation), thus the students themselves being the *second* generation of South Asians in Britain. This is not to say that the students’ parents were the *first* generation of South Asians



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in Britain. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study I am using the parents as a baseline from where mass migration from South Asia to Britain occurred.

I have deliberately avoided the use of 'community', whether it is a 'Muslim community', 'Indian or Pakistani community' or any other form of community, which implies some form of cohesion, both conscious and unconscious. I view the term as being too problematic to be able to place any of the groups within this form of collective, thus, the only bonds of commonality that do make sociological sense as identified by the students themselves is their country of origin and their religion. Likewise, I have not differentiated between the sects or traditions within Islam, such as Sunni, Shiite or Ahmedi. Being Muslims, there is a fundamental core belief, which is sufficient to link them together in, as Anderson (1983) calls it, an 'imagined community'.

Fundamentalism, as a term and concept, was coined as a positive self-definition by American Protestants during 1865-1910, and became a term in popular use from 1919 onwards after the foundation of the World Christian Fundamentalist Association. Essentially, it stood for a bible based morality and ideology which addressed the 'fundamentals' of Christianity and was opposed to any form of modernisation and accommodation with the modern world (RunnymedeTrust, 1997)

However, in relation to Islam, fundamentalist was first used in 1957 in the Middle East Journal. Burgess spoke of Islam and Muslims as fundamentalists. 'The phenomenon of the new, or rather very old, Islam, the dangerous fundamentalism revived by the Ayatollahs and their admirers as a device, indistinguishable from a weapon, for running a modern state' (A. Burgess, 1981). Burgess went on to say that Muslim states, Iran for instance, were 'little more than intolerant, bloody and finally incompetent animations of the Holy Book' (A. Burgess, 1981).

This article was influential in the sense that words like 'Islamist' and 'fundamentalist' became synonymous with Islam and Muslims. Indeed, according to the Runnymede Trust, between November 1994 and May 1997, the Daily Telegraph had 194 references to the word fundamentalist and in nearly three quarters of the occurrences of fundamentalism referred to Islam (RunnymedeTrust, 1997). The terms application to Islam and Muslims represents issues of politics, not theology, and



Islamic groups are labelled as fundamentalist, whatever their political persuasion. It has become a catchall term of abuse, which now is common currency.

This common usage of the term is not how I have used it. I have characterised the fundamentalist ideal type (Weber, 1978) and do not wish to impart any moral or ethical value to it. It is a descriptor, not a politicised label with negative connotations.

## **THE KEY VARIABLES AND WHY WAS CLASS NOT USED**

When examining questions of social identity, social scientists have often looked at structural issues of social class (Castles & Kosack, 1985; Gilroy, 1987), gender (Anthias & Davis, 1993), racism (Bains, 1988; Gilroy, 1987; Miles, 1989; Solomos, 1989), culture (Anwar, 1998; Fenton, 1999; Hall, 1992b; Watson, 1977) and educational under-achievement (Carby, 1992) which explains the type or nature of the identity positions held by particular minority ethnic groups. However, what I intend to examine and understand here is how the meanings and context of the social situations of South Asian Muslims students make sense to them based upon what they say *and* what I observe. I will give meaning and a framework to the issues, concepts, thoughts and actions which all lead to particular identity positions for them.

What has emerged during the course of the research is that structural factors give an interesting and useful outline or framework to the context within which South Asian Muslims students exist. These structural factors however do not give an understanding of the ways in which the students, as social actors, as individuals and as a group of South Asian Muslim students attending the same university see themselves develop, accommodate and adjust to their ever changing positions both in terms of their developing identities and their reflexive relationship with the structural pressures of the public sphere.

Thus, variables such as social class, gender and educational attainment are not treated as central issues in themselves, but rather, as interesting background variables with a contextual utility.



## THE LINE OF ARGUMENT

This study of the construction of religious and ethnic identity among South Asian Muslims students has yielded many broad explanatory factors as to how and why particular forms of religious and ethnic identity are formed. However, to make sense of the wide range of data and explanations, I decided to try out an explanatory framework which follows the following interlinked lines of argument.

The first is that there are social processes that operate on a number of different levels. The social boundary is an explanatory tool that will be of use in explaining the way in which the research participants, as individuals and as a group of Muslims from a common geographical area, negotiate and accommodate the contradictory and sometimes incompatible situations that they experience on a daily basis and in terms of how they describe themselves, whether as Muslim, British-Asian or Asian-British, or as plain British. This has implications for their self-definitions of nation, nationality, ethnicity and citizenship as well as their component(s) of religion in their identity make-up.

Another process is that of their relations with the culture and traditions of their parents' generation in the broader sense, that is, the customs and traditions of their parents and their view and idealisations of 'back home'. The research participants' relationships to the daily negotiation of their lifestyle and actions in their parents' home, their culture and religious practices come under considerable scrutiny in this study.

The third process that I have identified is in the reformulation of an idealised and politically active version of Islam. Islam is no longer a background 'guiding hand' as it was this generations parent's, setting out broad rules and traditions. It now forms an integral part of the students' identity and a source of social and political identity and strength in itself.

The second line of argument is the role that the forces of globalisation play in the lives of this group. Globalisation has, I will argue, a profound influence on the daily lives of actors through the articulation of opinions, labels and events around their religious and ethnic identity. For instance the Rushdie Affair (1989), in the popular consciousness, labelled Muslims and 'fundamentalists', 'militants' or 'book-



burners'. The response to the book *Satanic Verses*, occurred at many levels, at a global level it had an effect of defining Muslims within the international medias, national and international political discourse, local politics and ultimately, on the local 'street' level through acts of racist abuse and sometimes violence towards Muslims and their institutions.

Linked to this is the issue of 'race' and racism, which unlike class, is of direct relevance to this study. Here, the issue of 'race', identity, nation and a particular form of racism, 'Islamophobia' are particularly relevant. It is relevant because of what the students themselves talked about, and relevant in the sense that racism towards Muslims because of being Muslim is an increasingly common phenomenon (Modood, 1990a; RunnymedeTrust, 1997).

These three lines of argument, the social processes, globalisation as a force for defining and framing the debate around Islam and Islamophobia as a particular form of racism are inextricably linked in the way that second-generation South Asian Muslim students view their religious and ethnic identities. They seemed to be central to how they construct, negotiate and accommodate the strains from different spheres to gain a sense of ontological security.

## **THE INTIAL WORKING HYPOTHESIS. THE TWO IDEAL TYPES AS ORIENTATING TERMS FOR RELATING THEORY TO EMPIRICAL STUDY**

Initially, the working hypothesis was that there are a range of subject identity positions forming two polar opposites which reflects the religious activity of second generation South Asian Muslims. These polar opposites were characterised as falling into two ideal types that are popularly termed 'secularists' and 'fundamentalists'. These two ideal types have been adapted from the work and methodology of Max Weber (Fulbrook, 1978). An ideal type is a construction of meaningful categories in a logically pure form against which one can assess what happens in reality (Weber, 1978:20-21). There are two points that have to be made here. First, the 'secularist' or the 'fundamentalist' students will stand as theoretical constructs. It remains to be seen whether these categories are useful in describing the nature of the student 'types'. It will also demonstrate whether there can be a discrete categorisation of Muslims as either fundamentalist or secularist. This typification into two theoretically



mutually exclusive ideal types of secularists and fundamentalists can be described as follows.

The secularists are 'this worldly' in outlook, and adaptable to living in a Britain that is secular and residually Christian. They are instrumentally rational, i.e. they tend to live and work in ways that are sometimes contrary to Islam, and make a rational decision to do so, while instrumentally accommodating themselves, and their belief, to life in Britain. While Islam proscribes the consumption of pork, alcohol, sex outside marriage, and the free mixing of the sexes, the secularists have their own, more relaxed interpretation of Islam. They have adapted, and, to an extent to be explained, even adopted the lifestyle of the West. Regarded as an ideal type, they have a modernist and instrumental outlook, are potentially upwardly mobile, and as will be shown, exhibit a degree of ethnic effacement.

Conversely, the fundamentalist label consists of people who are 'conservative' in attitude. They adhere strictly to an ascribed identity, and their actions are, within this vein, value rational. By this, I mean that their religion informs their everyday behaviour through the values and traditions of Islam and their ethnic culture. They have a strict adherence to the laws and customs of Islam, and would not deviate from these, even at personal cost to themselves. They have an 'other worldly' outlook and tend to insulate themselves from the influences of modernity by surrounding themselves with all that is not of the West, i.e. a construction of what is taken to be Eastern. In the university these Muslim students are in the process of constructing a 'fundamentalist' identity. This can be seen in the popularity of extreme right wing fundamentalist groups within the university such as the Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Groups such as this draw their ideology and policies from militant Islamic groups from as far a field as North Africa, and in particular South Asia.

The second point is that these categories are a bridge between the classical sociological theory of Weber and the more contemporary debates about identity, culture, ethnicity, cultural racism and the effect of globalisation at a local level in peoples lives and I hoped that they would help me in my interviews and observations. The study goes beyond Weber's work on Islam (to be discussed in chapter 4) and puts issues of culture, identity, and religion into a contemporary setting. I will be engaging with current debates on globalisation and identity as discussed by others



(Anderson, 1983; Butler, 2001; P. Desai, 2000; Giddens, 1991, 1993; Hoogvelt, 1997; Jacobson, 1998).

Central to the thesis is the application of Giddens' ontological security, which indicates the strength of confidence the students have in living in Britain as South Asians, as Muslims, and as young people detaching themselves from the private sphere and moving into the public sphere. Giddens however does not provide a methodology of how to examine these issues. There is no clear methodological procedure outlined by Giddens that can be used to test ontological security; no method to test the effect of the 'global/local nexus' on these Muslim students; or any prescribed method to show how global political and cultural 'flows' influence the social actor. This is where grounded theory comes into play.

## **GROUNDING THEORY AS A METHOD**

Grounded theory is essentially a method for organising large quantities of data and inductively developing theory (Bryman, 1988). Grounded theory is used here in precisely this way. After the organising of data, it provides the means by which the working hypotheses that Muslim students can be typified into polar opposites of secularists or fundamentalists. The data from observation and unstructured interviews allowed the generation of categories which sought to examine the validity of the hypothesis, and ultimately to explain and create inductively a broad explanatory framework which would explain not only why and how students might fall into either or neither category, and also how the majority were located between the two extremes.

The findings that emanate from participant observation and grounded theory are used to test notions of ontological security, identity, and show how globalisation affects the individuals' construction of their religious and ethnic identity.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Concepts of cultural identity and ethnicity have taken a new twist in the past decade. This is especially relevant for the second generation Muslims. The identity tag of 'Muslim' is now much more politicised and radicalised. Identity can no longer be seen as an ascribed set of values that are passed down from the first generation.



One has to take into account the nature of the above events and their radicalisation with reference to a wider socio-political context. There are two strands to this, one operating on a local level and the other at a global level.

At the local level, anti-Muslim discourse is seen as natural and not problematic, at least for those purporting these views. The fatwa (religious edict) of Ayatollah Khomeini (February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1989) generated wide range coverage in the print and broadcast media, which, not only focused upon the plight of the author and the edict of Khomeini, but also on the Muslim response to the fatwa. This formed the context within which Muslims became popularly viewed, as illiberal, violent, subversive and inherently *incompatible* with how people should behave in a Western democracy.

In terms of violence on the street according to the Runnymede Trust there have been nine racist murders of Muslims between the years 1992-1993 (RunnymedeTrust, 1997). At the time of the Gulf War West Yorkshire Police a 100% increase in racist attacks because they were considered to be supporters of Saddam Hussein (Anwar, 1993). Indeed, 'Muslim', 'Rushdie' and 'Saddam' became popular racist slurs targeted directly at Muslims in the early 1990s. Around the same time, the linkage with Islam and South Asians, Pakistani and Bangladeshis in particular were becoming strong, as illustrated by graffiti on a bridge wall in West Hampstead, London. It read 'fuck Islam, Pakis go home'. (1993) There are numerous examples within the university itself and these will be picked up later in the thesis.

At a global level, the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestinians, the Rushdie Affair (1989), the Gulf War (1991) and the perception of Muslims as a threat to democracy and liberal values all provide a backdrop to which the students have to construct their own position in Britain. Islam and Muslims was being presented as belonging to a different civilisation (Huntington, 1993) or inherently threatening to the West as Willi Claes, the Secretary General of NATO stated, 'Muslim fundamentalism is at least as dangerous as communism once was. Please do not underestimate this risk... it is a serious threat because it represents terrorism, religious fanaticism and exploitation of social and economic justice' (Hollingsworth, 1993).



This climate of racism towards Muslims was keenly felt by students and formed an important part of their self-perception, as was the ever-present racism towards Muslims, which will be discussed in detail later in the thesis.

## **ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION**

This is where the original contribution of the thesis emerges. What I will show is that the subject's identity is a fluid phenomenon that adapts to the particular situations in which they find themselves. They can construct it either quite instrumentally, as the situation requires; they can stick to a fixed identity in all situations; or they can lie between the two, as the majority do. This study is an attempt to extend debates about ethnic identity that up to now has been linked mainly to colour and country of origin. It seeks to explain the very complex situation of young Muslims in Britain and to see how they perceive their existence, which I will treat as a matter of ontological security. With this in mind I will now turn to the historical, political and social context of South Asians in Britain.

## **ISLAM AS A GLOBALISED RELIGION**

There are 28 Muslim states in the world; and the estimated global population of Muslims is approximately 1.2 billion (Hoogvelt, 1997), or, twenty percent of the world population (Jacobson, 1998). This, between a fifth and a quarter of the worlds' population and 'even in Europe, heartland of Christianity, Muslim immigration and conversion has led to Islam being the second largest religion' in Europe (Hoogvelt, 1997).

Islam according to Weber, is one of the two strictly monotheistic religions, the other being Judaism (Freund, 1968). It is based on revelations to Muhammad in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and was seen to be the final word of God to be revealed after that of the Bible and Torah. The text of Islam is the Koran, which was revealed to Muhammad over a period of twenty-two years. The text was finally put together as a complete work after his death and is the primary source for Muslims since the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The other main source is the collected utterances of Muhammad, the Hadith, and his deeds and actions, the Sunnah.



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The core belief of Muslims is that of a single God who is both omnipotent and merciful who created the universe. Muslims believe that the Koran was revealed to Muhammad, which is the basis of Islamic law, or the Sharia. The sharia is the basis for all behaviour, rituals, social and political structures and, crucially, relations with kaffirs.<sup>3</sup> The sharia encourages the collectivisation of Muslims under a singular religious community called the umma.

It is clear that Islam in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has emerged as a religion of global proportions with significant political and economic. It is argued by Turner that Islamic fundamentalism is a cultural reaction against Westernism and consumerism (Turner, 1991a). But what are the roots of this?

### **Islam as a global ‘pariah’ and conflict between Islam and the West**

Historically, the conflict between Islam, Judaism and Christianity has been ongoing since before the death of Muhammad in 632 AD. Muhammad was instrumental in the uniting of disparate tribes that consisted of pagans, Christians and Jews in 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabia. Within a century of the death of Muhammad, the caliphs, or rulers had established an empire which was greater than that of Rome at its peak. This Muslim empire overcame the Byzantine and Sassanid empires of eastern Rome and Persia respectively.

During subsequent centuries the decline of a centralised Caliphate was replaced by individual states or Sultanates, which were located within Africa, East Asia, central and Southern Europe. This rapid spread of Islam was a clear threat to the existing Judaeo-Christian order, especially in Europe and East Asia, thus ‘Muslims were a threat to Western Christendom long before they became a problem’ (Rodinson, 1974). Indeed, perhaps the most long lasting events in early Islamic history that still have resonance today is the Crusades (1100 – 1500). The reverberations are still felt for Muslims and Christians. This, for Muslims, is confirmation that there is an imperialist project, whose target is Islam, and at the time of interview, George W Bush’s father carried out what many of the interviewees saw as the first of the modern day crusade, namely, the Gulf War in 1990.

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Non Muslims



For Christians, the idea still prevails that firstly the Crusades were fought to liberate Jerusalem and secondly Christendom was the victor (Esposito, 1992). For Muslims the echoes of this event epitomises, right up to today, the militancy of Christianity against Muslims and the 'aggression and imperialism of the Christian West' (Esposito, 1992:42).

However, the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine has provided the backdrop of current situation in the minds of not only the interviewees in this research project, but also, for their view of Jews and Christians as having imperialistic designs upon Muslim lands, their wealth (as in oil) and their Holy sites, for example, Jerusalem and Mecca.

In the past 25 years or so however, there has been greater focus upon the 'apparently related political and social events all over the world that have led Western commentators to speak of a militant Islamic revival' (Hoogvelt, 1997) or as Turner puts it, 'the emergence of fundamentalism and militant Islam is a striking feature of the 1970s and 1980s...with the Iranian revolution under the influence of the Ayatollah Khomeini, the political emergence of the late Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan, the Muslim resistance movement in Afghanistan, the growing importance of Shi'ism in the Middle East and the development of an Islamic resurgence in Malaysia' (Turner, 1991a:88).

For others (Beyer, 1994; Esposito, 1992; Hoogvelt, 1997; Sherbok, 1997; Turner, 1991b) key moments in recent history has been the overthrow of the Shah of Iran's pro Western monarchy by a Shiite Muslim cleric Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers in 1979 and the subsequent establishment of the world's first theocratic Islamic Republic. However, this was not the only event which is of significance for the interviewees, the Palestinian struggle in the occupied territories (including the Intifadah beginning in 1987), the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood and its role in the assassination of Anwar Sadat in Egypt (October 1981); the civil war in Sudan, the Algerian Islamist party FIS having its victory at the ballot box snatched away from it by the Algerian military (1990), the ongoing Muslim revolt in Indian occupied Kashmir, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979) and its final withdrawal in 1989; the destruction of the mosque in Ayodhya, India where Hindus militants 'liberated' what they argued was the birthplace of Lord Rama.



In addition to these events, of which there are many more, Samuel Huntington predicted the clash of civilisations (Huntington, 1993) where the nation-state is no longer the main participant in international relations, and thus, it is the world's peoples, ideologies and civilisations that will form the next level of conflict, and Muslims will be the source of conflict for the West. Thus, with Islamic militancy based upon a grossly inequitable distribution of wealth and resources amongst its peoples; and Muslims being ruled by repressive, autocratic and exploitative regimes, the response has been in the form of terrorist attacks on the West and as *The Economist* said 'Islam at its most ferocious is cutting a bloodstained path to the front of the world's attention' (Editorial, 1995).

This brief historical and political context shows that from 632 to the present day, relations have been one of mutual suspicion and intolerance. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, according to Sayyid there always has been a Caliphate from the death of the Prophet until 3 March 1924, and until the fall of the Ottoman Empire, there was still present an 'Islamic' state on the borders of Europe (Sayyid, 1997). These together with the Rushdie Affair and the Gulf War is the social and political backdrop under which the students were trying to come to terms with their identity and place in British society.

## **THE CONTEXT OF SOUTH ASIANS IN BRITAIN**

Migration from the since the 1940/50s, has been the most important phase of settlement as far as South Asians are concerned. In the case of migration from former colonies especially the New Commonwealth nations the migration has been mainly of the mode of economic migration (Solomos, 1996). It has been argued that this occurred due to the need for labour in the UK and the lack of employment opportunities in the New Commonwealth at the time. This coupled with the accessibility of the immigration laws allowed large-scale immigration into the UK.

Since primary immigration began in the 1940s there has been discontinuous rise in the South Asian population of Britain and consequently its Muslim



component. With this rise it has become clear that the South Asian population is not homogenous, but a diverse group. This diversity is not simply geographical, but also religious, cultural, and linguistic (Anwar, 1998; Knott, 1996; Modood, 1997; Modood, Beishon, & Virdee, 1994).

### **South Asian Migration**

South Asians have had a history (and possibly before the colonisation by the British) of migration before this century. This was linked inevitably to the colonial state under British control. The main form of labour movement or migration under this system was that of indentured labour (Clarke, Peach, & Vertovec, 1990). Labour was either indentured or bound by contract. These were subject to forced or push factors, whether they were intended as permanent or transitory residence.

Indentured labour, as a system, operated between 1834 and 1912. People were sent, under contract, by the colonial authorities, to Africa, West Indies, and the Pacific Islands (amongst other places) between the period 1834-1924 (Clarke et al., 1990). After the abolition of slavery in 1834 there was a need for cheap labour in all corners of the Empire. The British colonial authorities therefore established a system of indentured immigration. The emigrants were required to serve 5 years in return for certain basic facilities and a return voyage to India (Clarke et al., 1990). In summary, early settlement was linked to the colonial needs of labour, and much of the indentured labour took place in the 19th and early 20th century.

### **Post World War II**

Large-scale migration to Britain began in the 1950s (Ballard & Ballard, 1977; Clarke et al., 1990) among others. It is argued that male pioneers come over, found work, and 'settled' in a semi-permanent fashion in shared accommodation, with the intention of returning one day. Gradually they brought over their family members, and eventually re-established their families and accumulated material assets in the new country through the process of chain migration (Anwar, 1979; Dahya, 1974). In the modern world, with its accompanying travel, communication etc, it is relatively



easy to maintain or even re-establish ties with family, social networks, and kinship ties and religious affiliation.<sup>4</sup>

I will now turn to Pakistani, Indian, and Bangladeshi migration in turn.

### **Pakistani Migration**

Migration is defined by Anwar as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence. It can be from one country to another or simply from one part of a country to another which may involve a move from rural to urban areas... therefore no restriction is placed upon the distance of the move, the voluntary or involuntary nature of the act, and no distinction is made between external and internal migration (Anwar, 1985).

There are three main reasons for Pakistani migration to the Britain. First, the colonial and therefore political and economic link with Britain, second the political freedom of movement and finally, the economic push and/or pull which resulted in chain migration (Anwar, 1979).

One of the main motives of migration was that it should be semi- permanent in order to work for a higher wage (or work at all since unemployment and underemployment rates were high) than that which was possible in their home country, and to earn money to buy land, build a house, or even save for a daughter or sister's marriage dowry and expenses. For these semi-permanent settlers, acceptance and adoption of British (and by) society was not an issue, in other words, integration or assimilation was not on the agenda.

Professionally qualified people, on the other hand, migrated for different reasons. They included doctors, engineers and lawyers who, came to improve or build upon their academic qualifications but not to settle.

Immigration after and during the World Wars occurred where there were a sizeable number of people from areas of pre-partition India now constituting Pakistan joined the Allied armies and navies. Indeed Anwar argues that parts of the Punjab, Mirpur and Jhelum in particular had a high number of their men in the British army

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<sup>4</sup> For Muslims migration to the UK enabled people to perform the Hajj to those who would not have otherwise been able to. For Muslims the Hajj and contact with the wider ummah or Muslim community are very important.



(Anwar, 1979). There were according to the British 'certain races' with military capacity; among these were Muslims and Sikhs, as they were in strong numbers in the Punjab.<sup>5</sup> From Mirpur people joined not only soldiers but also as seamen. The seamen were known as *lascar* or 'assistant' seamen. According to Sherwood lascars were Indian Seamen employed on British registered ships from at least the seventeenth century. Though technically British Subjects, special legislation deprived them of this status and restricted their 'Britishness' regarding employment to particular parts of the world...except in times of war (Sherwood, 1991). The reasons for migrating can be divided into two categories, 'push' and 'pull'. The push factors identified by Anwar are:

- The poor quality of arable land
- The tradition of employment away from home
- Unemployment or underemployment.

Two other major events also served to 'push' people from the area that they inhabited. First was the partition of India and Pakistan, and the second was the construction of the Mangla Dam. Anwar argues that what was common to both these events was the mass displacement of people where there was an exchange of population between east and West Punjab (Anwar, 1979).

There was also mass movement from India. In 1951 9.81% of total population of Pakistan were muhajir (migrants). Most of the settlement took place from Punjab. The muhajirs formed 55% of Karachi and 28% of old Punjab and 20% of Bhawalpur (Anwar, 1979).

Secondly Anwar argues that the early sixties saw the construction of the Mangla dam, which caused the displacement of 100,000 people. These people were financially compensated and used the money to finance their migration to the U.K to work, indeed.

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<sup>5</sup> The population of Punjab was 20 million, and of these 350,000 were recruited as soldiers. While the population of Bengal was 45 million and only 7000 soldiers were recruited.



‘It has been argued that the large number of Mirpuris in Britain are a direct result of displacement by the dam, and an arrangement at government level to admit them to Britain’ (Allen, 1971:32).

Thus according to Anwar, when immigration laws were being put into place, Mirpuris were engaged in a ‘beat-the-ban-rush’. Therefore this was a period of mass (primary) immigration in the early 1960s. To support this Anwar argues that in 1951 there were 11,117 Pakistani’s in England and Wales. Of these 6,130 were so called ‘white’ Pakistanis, in other words people of white parents who were born in Pakistan before and after partition. In 1960 the number of Pakistanis in Britain was 20,000.

### **Indians in Britain**

India’s population, according to the 1991 Census of India, is 844 million inhabitants. It has a literacy level of 52% and is much more advanced than either Pakistan or Bangladesh in the degree of industrialisation and is *the* dominant power (politically, economically, and militarily).

Indians form the largest group from South Asia in Britain today. They were joined in the early seventies by East African Indians, and it is important to note that many of the ‘Indian Muslims’ in Britain today are from this group. Indian migrants have tended to form communities according to their regional culture, language and kinship ties and that Indian communities overseas were organised and settled on the basis of regional culture and language rather than on an all-India basis (R. Desai, 1963).

He describes the wave of migration from India as ‘economically motivated’ (R. Desai, 1963:2). He further argues that the main areas of migration from India were the Punjab and Gujarat. It must also be noted that apart from colonial ties the UK was the only country to allow free entry for the purpose of earning money. Other commonwealth countries had closed entry to Indians or had only a small quota who were allowed entry, and both the Punjab and Gujarat had problems of underemployment and unemployment.

Indo-Pak migration began in significant numbers after 1952 ‘at the tail end of the European influx’ (R. Desai, 1963:3). The peak he suggests occurred between the



years 1954-1955 and it was then that the Indian government imposed restrictions on people leaving. In 1958 passport offices in India were centralised to Delhi, weeding out the less economically able.<sup>6</sup> Further restrictions imposed since 1960 made it 'extremely difficult, if not impossible, for an uneducated, unskilled [person] to obtain a passport and endorsement to come to the UK' (R. Desai, 1963:4). Compare this with Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Indeed, those who did enter for the two years before the Commonwealth Immigrants Act were dependants of those who were already settled here.

### **Bangladeshis in Britain**

East Pakistan became Bangladesh March 1971 after a civil war and was located a thousand miles away from the Western half of the country with its own distinct languages and cultures; indeed 'Bengalis' had more in common with the North Eastern Indians than they had with their Western compatriots as far as linguistic and cultural considerations are taken.

The population of Bangladesh is 112 million, of which 85% are Muslim, 14% Hindu, and the remainder forming small Christian and Buddhist communities. It has a low literacy rate (24%) and is even lower among women (Nabi, 1995).

Bangladesh is a much-impoverished country, subject to cycles of extreme climatic conditions such as cyclones and floods, and is subject to continuous political and economic instability. The economy is mainly agrarian, therefore the majority of the Bangladeshi people work on the land and Bangladeshis rely heavily on remittances from overseas. The remittances are used for the financial maintenance of extended families, house construction, land purchase, and the inevitable financial capital required for the marriage of family members (especially female members such as daughters and sisters). In the period 1976-1983 expatriate Bangladeshis remitted US\$2 billion to Bangladesh (Gardner & Shukur, 1994). This however all but stopped during the Gulf War and still has not recovered to its pre-war levels.

The structural position of Bangladeshis in Britain is probably a reflection on their relatively late arrival. In other words one explanation for the socio-economic

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<sup>6</sup> It could be argued that this financial screening actually resulted in the economically better off and mainly urban migration from India as opposed to Pakistan and Bangladesh, thus the consequent socio-economic status of these groups in Britain today



state of Bangladeshis in Britain today compared to other South Asian Muslim groups is because of their relatively late arrival, as whole family units (the men were already here) and because of entry of families at a time when unemployment was high and the economic state of the country was in recession. Other factors that should be taken into account are that the population of Bangladeshis is young and they are only starting to develop their potential. The majority of this group have not reached the age bracket in which earnings are highest, and they have more old people and economically inactive people at home.

Migration has been an established tradition in those areas where the majority of Bangladeshis who now reside in Britain originate from i.e. Sylhet. It has been argued that this region, because of its political instability and underemployment patterns, has been an important ‘push’ factor in their migration (Gardner & Shukur, 1994). These factors have been at work in various guises throughout the post-colonial history of South Asia, and can explain why the pattern of Bangladeshi migration is so different to that which is seen in India and Pakistan. In addition many Bangladeshis from the coastal regions were hired during the First World War. Eade suggests that some of these lascars ‘jumped ship’ at ports overseas, particularly in the East End of London, and other port towns, thereby establishing small communities where they disembarked (Eade, 1990). It is important to note that in the early days of Bangladeshi migration the communities were to a large extent male, women coming over much later, usually in the early 1970s.

### **Britain’s need for a migrating labour force**

Why did migration occur from the New Commonwealth to Britain? Migration does not occur on such a scale without reason, and it is important within the context of the thesis to see why and how it occurred.

Britain is not unique among former colonial powers in requiring an immigrant labour force. Post 1945 ‘immigrant workers have become a structural necessity for the economies of the receiving countries’ (Castles & Kosack, 1985:25). The post war boom was regarded as a ‘reconstruction boom’ (Castles & Kosack, 1985:25), i.e. one that required the rebuilding and reconstruction of infrastructure, and to service the needs of an expanding economy, (especially in jobs that were not desirable to the



indigenous labour force, such as low paid and unskilled work in manufacturing, transport, and the National Health Service). Immigration according to Castles and Kosack was not planned by the state in accordance with the required economic and structural requirements of the economy. So 'government immigration policies have come after the event, to control already existing movements rather than to determine them from the outset' (Castles & Kosack, 1985:25). Indeed, Castles and Kosack go on to argue that the social problems relating to immigration are a result of a lack of planning because no facilities had been prepared in advance. This is debatable since not all the problems arising from immigration (for the immigrants themselves and for wider society) are structural as they suggest.

Again the 'pull and push' factors come up in the argument in the reasons for people choosing (or being forced) to migrate. 'Pull' factors were a combination of economic, demographic, and social developments in Western Europe. In post-war Britain the massive reconstruction took up much of the returning military personnel. The life expectancy was increasing, more young people were staying on longer at school, and inevitably the loss of life during the war all combined to create an environment where unemployment was extremely low. Indeed there was a severe labour shortage (Castles & Kosack, 1985).

The social factors, which brought about an immigrant workforce combined with the above factors, did not impact on the size of the labour force but rather on its structure. Under conditions of full employment indigenous workers were able to move into better paid jobs with better working conditions, more often than not into skilled and white collar occupations requiring higher educational and vocational training. This created the unskilled labour shortage (Castles & Kosack, 1985).

'Push' factors relating to the country of origin, I would argue, were always there. For many the deciding factor was the possibility of the attractive alternative that could be provided by the prevailing economic conditions in Britain. There were two main factors (push) described by Castles (1985). First was the high population growth in the country of departure. In Pakistan for instance the annual population growth rate was 3.1%. Second the level of income per capita was very low compared to Britain. The per capita income for Pakistan for instance was \$125 compared \$1977 per annum in Britain (Castles & Kosack, 1985:27-28). It is interesting to note that the



push factors for Anwar (above) are quite different to the reasons given by Castles and Kosack. It is possible that a combination of the two resulted in the mass migration seen since the 1950s, and is common to all three sending countries.

Once migration had occurred then what was the experience of South Asians and Muslims in particular? I will look at this in the next section.

## **ACCOUNTS OF THE SOUTH ASIAN AND SOUTH ASIAN MUSLIM EXPERIENCE IN THE UK**

### **South Asians in Britain**

Above I described the history of migration of South Asians in Britain in terms of the mode of migration from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Here I will be looking at accounts of the South Asian and South Asian Muslim experience in the UK.

According to Stopes-Roe & Cochrane, 'Asian groups now in Britain present reasonably clearly defined populations in terms of religion, language and culture. They have been here long enough to have families that have grown up entirely in Britain and have had the opportunity to observe and interact with most aspects of British life' (Stopes-Roe & Cochrane, 1987).

Indeed, the group that this study focuses on is the generation that are the children of the South Asians who migrated to the UK between 1950 and 1973. However, the experience of the research subjects is quite different to that of their parents. For instance, the second generation are less subject to being 'ghettoised' than their parents were (Rex, 1994:45), their religions are more accepted as are their cultures, they are less likely to avoid mixing with white society, or, as Bains put it, are less to hide themselves away from 'whitey' (Bains, 1988:226).

The parents of the second generation faced a multitude of disadvantages, which, I will look at briefly here. The three areas that I want to concentrate on are the politics of immigration after 1945, various pieces of 'race' relations' legislation and finally the urban context.

Linked to the above in the political context of immigration since the end of the Second World War can be framed within the context of Britain needing to reconstruct



itself, replace a depleted workforce and the post war economic boom. These three factors are interlinked. Between 1945 and 1954 most inward migration was from Europe, with up to 100,000 Irish people migrating to Britain, together with Polish ex-service men and their families. In addition there was some Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Yugoslavia (Solomos, 1989).

The contrast between the 'white' migrants and those from the New Commonwealth (or non-white migrants) reception was expressed in terms of the possible rise in racial and social problems. The response of the Conservative government all throughout the 1950s was to quell the arrival of non-white migrants (Solomos, 1989).

### **British Muslims and the social and political context of the study**

Nielsen suggests that while there are external factors, there are also internal factors within the community such as the 'tensions between the older and the younger generations of Muslims, between orthodox urban-based and traditional village-based expressions of Islam, not to mention tensions amongst various Muslim movements both inside and outside of Europe (Nielsen, 1992:156) and as a result of this Nielsen argues that the immense pressure placed on Muslims organisations in Europe 'Islam has to become an ethnic identity' (Nielsen, 1992:124).

As is mentioned above, it is Muslims, as a group, who are identified by others as a group, and as a 'community of believers' or *ummah* that marks them out. So, it is not only South Asian Muslims who are identifiable by their religion. In the UK there are Sikhs, Hindus and others. However, what is it about South Asians of religious belief that marks them out so clearly? While skin colour and dress are obvious markers British sociology has only recently started to look at religion as a factor when examining the various communities of South Asia. For instance religion has only been examined as a factor on the margins of more important issues to be examined (Knott, 1996). However, studies are beginning to show the importance of religion to these communities and the central role it plays in the construction of their identity and ethnicity.

Issues that arose within the 1980s and early 1990s that have set the context and tone of the debate for South Asians and Muslims in particular. There are issues and



events such as (to mention a few), the Ray Honeyford (1985) and Maureen McGoldrick (1986) incidents in schools that led to debates about the education of South Asians in mainstream schools and created an impetus for separate schools, diet and the ritual slaughter of animals (1982). The Swann Report (1985) detailing the education of ethnic minority children, the Rushdie Affair, the controversy over the refusal to award grant aided status to Muslim schools (1988); the formation of the Islamic Party of Great Britain (1989) and the formation of the Muslim Parliament (1992); school dress (the controversy over the *hijab*) in French schools (1990) and the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq and the consequent presence of ‘coalition’ forces in the region (especially US and UK forces operating ‘no-fly-zones in north and Southern Iraq and a US troop presence in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States).

In addition to the above examples, South Asian Muslims occupied the bottom rung of the socio-economic ladder. Modood states, ‘...if a racial underclass exists in Britain, here it is. The first step in understanding the anti-SV [Satanic Verses] militancy is to recognise that we are talking about a semi-industrialized, newly urbanised working class community that is only one generation away from rural peasantry’ (Modood, 1992:261). Modood is correct to identify social-economic deprivation. But class is not the only issue here, the strong, indelible link with religion that Muslims experience is another (Jacobson, 1998).

Anwar argues that religion is an important part of the ethnic identity of Muslims, and that the tensions of a second generation of being a minority have particular problem of existing in a social and political system where the two cultures that they have inherited are not always compatible (Anwar, 1982). Rex makes a similar point i.e. South Asian Muslims occupy two separate cultural domains, the public domain, and the private one where they speak their own language, practise religion and practice their own customs and traditions (Rex, 1994). The concept of the two cultures, which are separate and not always compatible, was also picked up by Halstead, but he states that it is problematic to describe young Muslims as being caught between the two cultures (Halstead, 1994). For Halstead, being caught between two cultures could be applied to all children, in terms of a generation gap, public and private domains, their own class position and other class positions.



To address this challenge of being, Muslim in Britain many organisations have been set up to give some direction and or leadership to the communities that exist all over Britain. These include mosques, national organisations such as the Islamic Foundation, the UK Islamic Mission, the Union of Muslim Organisations and the Muslim Parliament. Young Muslims UK and the radical movement Hizb-ut-Tahrir are tailored towards younger Muslims. These groups and organisations have attempted to provide direction and leadership for Muslims, for all Muslims in Britain (Jacobson, 1998:37-38)

This is the backdrop within which the students in this study existed in when the student activism at London Guildhall University amongst the Muslim students and led by the Islamic Society began to mount various campaigns within the university (between 1990-1996) and this was further influenced by the presence of Hizb-ut-Tahrir, a radical Muslim political organisation. There were a number of incidents such as the campaign to get a prayer room for students, rising tensions with other student groups such as the Christian Society and Jewish students representatives, which culminating in an organised day of protest, in co-ordination with other Hizb-ut-Tahrir student groups across the country, which, in London Guildhalls University's case resulted in the closure of the campus for a day. The politicisation of faith

Faith in a religion, as mentioned above is a central part Muslim identity for South Asians. The belief in the five pillars of Islam, the uniqueness of Islam as the one true faith, and the very deep entrenchment of Islam in the Muslim psyche is only part of the role that being a Muslim entails. For Muslims global events such as the gulf war or the Rushdie Affair, are not simply isolated incidents but rather a deep attack on their faith, their ethnicity and their national identity. As Werbner put it, the Muslim 'street backed Saddam Hussein, from Karachi to Manchester' (Werbner, 1994:213).

Conversely, it was what could be argued as one of their own who, in their opinion betrayed, not his country of origin (India) not his prominent position as a South Asian in Britain, but his Muslimness. He has a Muslim name, Salman Rushdie, came from a Muslim family, but in the eyes of Muslims, slandered the prophet, his family, and all Muslims. However, it is not simply Muslims reacting to particular



social conditions or large public events. But rather it could be seen that there was essentially, as referred to a 'new clash of civilisations' (Huntington, 1993). Huntington identified three main civilisations, the West (Europe and the USA), the East (the Confucian cult) and Islam. This is an acknowledgement of Islam as a global threat, something against which poses a threat to 'Western values'. The disembedding of Islam from the East to the East End of London is a clear marker as to how politicised Islam (and Muslims) have become. However the roots of such conflict are located much further back in history. Confrontation between Islam and the West, is political, cultural economic as well as being a religious clash. If the crusades are a distant event of another time and place, then it cannot be ignored that the crusades is the progenitor of modern problems in terms of Western and Muslim relations. Said argued that the West was defining itself in terms of victory and superiority over the defeated Muslims (Said, 1978). This enabled European imperialist conquerors, to develop a self vision of superiority because it took the knowledge of the Arabs' language and customs, science and philosophy in their most base form, coupling it with notions of 'race', language and religion as an explanation for the decline of Muslims and the simultaneous rise of the West (Rodinson, 1974).

Sayyid suggests that at the end of the Second World War; the fall of the Ottoman Empire; the decline of the Caliphate and the rise of Kemalism; the Western colonial powers created an unnatural territorial boundary with no real basis in history, lineage, culture or identity to maintain disunited Muslim peoples (Sayyid, 1997). It is not surprising that Muslims the world over, from Turkey to North Africa, from East Asia to South Asia, felt aggrieved at their treatment and exploitation by the imperialist Western powers. The imposition of a colonial legacy in areas such as education, bureaucracy etc led to deep rifts in those states between the so-called modernisers and what Sayyid and others (Roy, 1995:3) calls Islamists. Indeed this political Islam is a product of the modern world and its subordinate position to the West (Roy, 1995). Therefore, it is a socio-political project where Islam is more of a political ideology as well as a religion. However, the Islamists, neofundamentalist, or plain fundamentalists see this Western dominance as a failure of the political regimes of the Muslim states. They see this subordination as a result of, not modernity, but as a move away from a true faith (Roy, 1995). Indeed, 'neofundamentalist entails a shrinking of the public space to the family and the mosque'. in other words, Islam, or



particular radical/politicised interpretations of it, become part of the project (Roy, 1995:3). This was seen in Iran (1979), post Soviet Afghanistan (1990) and Pakistan in 1979. Islam in these nations was revived, a Muslim version of a radical politicised ideology that rejects the West, sees itself as the only way to break the exploitative relation and to find an alternative way in the modern world. At a popular level it sees its project as a *jihad* or struggle against not only the occident, but capitalism, communism and the modernisers of Islam.

This is the context that the students in this study had to contend with in terms of external perceptions of Islam and them as Muslims. It had a profound effect upon their daily lives and was an important part of how they saw themselves. This coupled with the structural disadvantages in terms of employment, housing, racism, the coalition against Saddam Hussein, the almost fanatical support for Rushdie, it is not surprising to see how some organised around one unifying feature of Islam, a politicised Islam.

It is with the above in mind this thesis will show how second generation South Asian students live and perceive their lives and construct their ethnic and religious identity, in Britain.

In the second chapter I will review the literature which and present the academic debates around 'race', ethnicity, identity, nationalism and globalisation. After this in the third chapter I will describe and rationalise the methodology used. In the following two chapters I will present the findings and then the discussion and conclusions.



## **CHAPTER 2 - A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

An examination of the issues that affect and contribute to the social situation of young South Asian Muslims in Britain will inevitably touch upon a range of fields of study. In this chapter I will present the significant literature that provides the background to the issues that the thesis is based upon. In particular I will look at the following areas; 'race' and racism, ethnicity, nationalism, culture and religion, identity in sociology and theories of globalisation. The literature around these concepts forms the background upon which a more detailed discussion of the identity of South Asian Muslims in Britain can be discussed. The concepts of 'race' and racism are an important experience of the South Asian in Britain, and this is more so for Muslims. 'Muslimness' is a central part of their ethnicity and identity, and this is often in conflict or at least problematic with the prevailing national identities. Thus, these issues and concepts need to be presented in order to gain some understanding of not only the literature, but also, how, in a globalised world, the nature of identity, religion, culture and ethnicity act upon the daily lives of this group.

### **'RACE' AND RACISM**

It is now commonplace to preface any discussion on ethnicity and perhaps identity with a review of the literature on the issue of 'race'. 'Race' in 'quotation marks' signifies the problematic and highly contested nature of the concept. It is a term that has much popular usage and is so deeply entrenched within the popular psyche that it is generally regarded as a natural phenomenon. Not only is 'race' common currency among populations (Anthias & Davis, 1993; Miles, 1989; Rex, 1986) but it has been used by ruling elites to justify their policies. For instance, the Nazis classification of Jewish, Polish, Gypsies and homosexual people in the 1930s and 1940s as subhuman to the 'master Aryan race' was used to justify their genocide (Solomos & Back, 1996).

A good starting point to examine 'race' is Miles's view that there are three main discourses with regards to 'race' (Miles, 1989). They are the discourse of the biological sciences, the social sciences and finally the everyday and political



discourses. For the first of these, the biological and genetic science as a scientific entity has no basis in reality, in the sense that the term 'race' can not be used to refer groups of peoples or to populations differentiated by average frequencies of specific polymorphic genes (Miles, 1989). In other words, you cannot differentiate a person's 'race' by the form of their genes, or by the phenotypic characteristics such as skin colour or hair 'type'. Similarly, despite the phenotypic characteristics, there is no basis for a constructed hierarchy of discrete racial groups such as Caucasian or Negroid. The reason for this is that it is not possible (yet) to identify a person's 'race' simply by examining the genetic profile of an individual. Therefore, through an examination of a person's genes, it is not possible to identify what particular 'race' they belong to, as genes for particular phenotypic manifestations are not yet identifiable. In terms of biology the usage of 'race' as a concept has its origins in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century's examination and exploration of the origins of humans. For Mason the conceptual utility of 'race' was its incorporation 'into racist theory, purported to offer an explanation of and justification for the exploitation and subordination of blacks by whites' (Mason, 1990a:5-6). This justification and explanation of racism still has resonance today. If people who belong to a more powerful group can characterise a less powerful group by stereotyping, then this treatment justifies their behaviour towards them.

The use of 'race' can occur at two levels. First, it is the first thing that is noticed about a person they see, and is defined by external characteristics such as skin colour. Second, these characteristics are used as a marker for assumptions about that group. As Omi and Winant state;

'One of the first things we notice about people when we meet them (along with their sex) is their race. We utilise race to provide clues about who a person is. This fact is made painfully obvious when we encounter someone whom we cannot conveniently racially categorize-someone who is, for example, racially 'mixed' or of an ethnic racial group we are not familiar with. Such an encounter becomes a source of discomfort and momentarily a crisis of racial meaning.' (Omi & Winant, 1994:59)

Individuals are therefore allocated or ascribed a particular racial category, and, on this basis, take up membership of a collective group (Miles, 1989).



However, (Donald & Rattansi, 1992) and Smaje (Smaje, 1995) have argued, like Miles and others that to assign biological significance to 'race' has been discredited. On this basis it has been argued that as a sociological and social scientific concept, 'race' should no longer be used (Miles, 1989) Indeed, as Miles argues, 'race' as a concept 'should be explicitly and consistently confined to the dustbin of useless terms' (Miles, 1989:72).

This is however not the end of the matter. If 'race' does not exist, then why is its effect felt as a social phenomenon? Just because it is generally accepted in the social sciences that 'race' does not have any basis in science that does not mean that people do not ascribe meaning and significance to the concept. The popular consciousness maintains that phenotypic characteristics such as colour of skin are an important differentiating marker and stratifier. Rattansi argues that to say that there is no such thing as race 'offers only the frail reassurance that there *shouldn't* be a problem. It cannot deal with the problems that do exist, because it fails to see them for what they are' (Donald & Rattansi, 1992:1; Hall, 1992a:1; Modood, 1992:1).

The meaning and social significance of the concept of 'race' as mentioned above has been argued to have its origins in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and was linked to the rise of capitalism, colonialism and the trade in slaves (Solomos, 1996; Solomos & Back, 1996). The meaning and social application of 'race' however is not fixed, it changes and develops over time and within different social concepts. What is important is not 'race' as a concept but rather its manifestation (racism) in particular social contexts, how it arises, and the effect it has on people who experience this form of social prejudice.

Different forms of racism, of different varieties have the following aspects in common.

1. Social relationships between groups elevate biological characteristics such as skin colour, shape of eyes and social and moral characteristics as being peculiar to the group and as being fixed in time
2. These characteristics are inextricably linked to the notions of a group identity and belonging to a particular place



3. The relationships between groups are based on an unequal power distribution and the exploitative exercising of power (Solomos, 1996: Solomos & Back, 1996).

Thus, where these features are observed it is said that racism operates. However, what has been observed) is a 'new racism'. Here attention shifts from biological difference to cultural difference (Barker, 1981). This move in focus (Modood, 1990b, 1992, 1994; RunnymedeTrust, 1997; Solomos & Back, 1996)} refers to how much emphasis is based on rather than skin colour and place of origin rather than differences in cultural practices, beliefs and customs. The Runnymede Trust has noted the rise in a phenomenon of racism that is based upon the perceived cultural practices of a particular group and this has had a profound effect on South Asian Muslims in Britain (RunnymedeTrust, 1997). The cultural racism is not simply based upon 'race' but on upon being Muslim.

While South Asians have been subject to racism by virtue of being colonised, it is post war migration and the experience of racism that I am interested here. Racism is the application of power of one group over another by virtue of their 'race'. For Todorov, however, racism has a dual meaning or application. The first is a mode of behaviour that manifests itself in a hatred of those who have physical characteristics different to that of their own. The second is that of an ideology or a doctrine that covers human races (Todorov, 2000). What is of particular importance here is the racisms experienced by South Asian Muslims in the UK.

Racism, in essence, according to Miles, is linked to the structural position and the experience of the racialised population. This is particularly the experience of people from Asian and Afro-Caribbean origin. This process of exclusion, exploitation and dehumanisation, however, is not solely located within a structural context, as far as the South Asian's and Afro-Caribbean's are concerned. It is linked to a history, experience and folklore that have been passed down through generations. The contemporary experience of racism is mediated by social class and historical factors (Rex, 1994; Rex & Modood, 1994) but what is of particular interest here is the experience of racism that is there in addition to class and other social structures. Religion, while accepted as a factor in social structure, does present us with another



dimension that cannot be explained by theories of 'race' alone. The idea of religion will be looked at in chapters 3, 4 & 5.

## **ETHNICITY AND ETHNIC GROUPS**

An ethnic group can be defined as one that 'has a shared culture that includes language, customs and religion' (Murji, 2002:161) while for Fenton and ethnic group is one that demarcates themselves from other people on the basis of language, customs, traditions, ancestry and culture (Carter, Fenton, & Modood, 1999; Fenton, 1999). On the other hand (Anthias & Davis, 1993) uses ethnicity as a tool for forming boundaries through which resources are struggled for by ethnic groups. This allows the demarcation of ethnicity from the wider concept of culture. Stemming from this it is argued that ethnicity is not simply to be seen in terms of culture and identity. Indeed, ethnicity is no longer seen as a fixed, primordial entity through which the 'whole' of a person or group can be identified and characterised. Others, such as (Cohen, 1974; Dahya, 1974) and Rex (Rex, 1986; Rex & Mason, 1986) see ethnicity as more of a political project which draws on culture and other identity resources such as religion, language, dress, food, customs and traditions. This is something I will examine in regard to South Asian Muslim cultures.

Ethnicity is not a fixed cultural unit, but rather needs to be seen within a wider context of general social relationships. Barth agreed that ethnic identification or categorisation within the group is where the actors of an ethnic group ascribe and identify themselves to a particularly recognisable social grouping (Barth, 1968). The markers of these ascriptions are wide and varied but mainly about origins, background and history etc. For Barth, they highlight the cultural differences, but still, it is the boundaries between different ethnic groups that need examination that ethnicity acts as a 'boundary marker' can be found in the work of Barth (Barth, 1968). This work suggests that ethnicity and hence ethnic identities are flexible and changeable. Put simply, Barth suggested that moving across social boundaries tend to retain their cultural identities, and, what is important is not so the internal workings and dynamics of particular cultural systems, but rather the social activity which occurs at the boundaries where different cultures meet (Barth, 1968). Essentially, ethnicity, ethnic groups and the identification with one or other groups is socially constructed. This model helps to explain the dynamics of inter ethnic relations and



starts to give an insight into the dynamics of ethnicity and identity in terms of particular groups such as South Asian Muslims in a multi-ethnic Britain.

From the work of Barth (Barth, 1968, 1969) stems the work of Wallman. Wallman suggests that ethnic identity is articulated in particular situational contexts and that it is ascribed and inherited (Wallman, 1979a, 1979b). Ethnicity, and thus identification with an ethnic group occurs when two or more cultural groups come into contact. It is a product of what people experience subjectively, not what may be objectively present.

Theorists agree that ethnicity is the subjective, self-definition of a social group. Whether this self-definition is derived primordially or whether it is recently invented (E Hobsbawm, 1983) ethnicity is constituted by a common history, linguistic traditions is problematic and not easily resolved. Or whether it is 'imagined' and 'invented' (Anderson, 1983).

Wallman (1978) argued that what is important is the social boundary between groups. The interface between groups is what marks and defines the edge of a social system. Wallman's model states that ethnicities need an ethnic or racial 'other' against which to be defined and they are a product of interaction between dominant and subordinate groups; here, Wallman focuses upon what she sees as the ethnic majority, not on the minority populations. The reason she says, for this is so that attention is drawn to the fact that it is English determines the boundary of 'them' and determines its significance (Wallman, 1978). So for the ethnic majority racism is as a result of the ethnicity of the majority, not the minority. Thus the boundary between ethnic groups is 'policed by contemporary racism' (Solomos, 1996; Solomos & Back, 1996).

On a larger scale membership of an ethnic group is not necessarily bound to a particular geographical region. While ethnicities do exhibit themselves in terms of small geographical areas, or locally, ethnicity can be a global phenomenon. This is seen most clearly amongst Muslims. Muslims are not the same the world over, but what they do present is a global presence 'in such a way local forms are seen within an international framework' (Fenton 1999: 12). Indeed, Fenton argues that ethnicity is a 'social process, as the moving boundaries and identities which people,



collectively and individually, draw around themselves in their social lives (Carter et al., 1999; Fenton, 1999)

Having said this however, Rex puts a different spin on the issue (Rex 1973, 1983). Ethnicity is only a partial factor within a social context, where political and economic relations are also important. Indeed, one of the basic errors of studies of 'ethnic' relations is that it tries to create theories of ethnic relations (Carter et al., 1999; Fenton, 1999). For Rex, ethnicity is embedded within relations that are defined politically, economically and socially. Thus ethnicity works within a structured contextuality. Rex argues that there are three characteristics that establish where and how ethnic relations or relations between ethnic groups are defined. These are firstly, where there is a situation of unequal differentiation between groups; secondly, where groups are recognisable through physical appearance such as colour, or their culture or ancestry; third is where the differentiation is justified through history or biology. Groups that conform to this typification are migrants, minority groups, refugees, and indeed, peoples of different cultures, religions and linguistic traditions. This is essentially the position that South Asian Muslims find themselves in. They are economically, politically and socially marginalized and this is a central part of the defining features of their relations to the dominant group and important in how they form their identities. But how does the national context deal with issues of ethnicity and 'race', and what are the implications for ethnic and religious minorities and their identities? This is what I will be pursuing in the next section.

## **NATIONALISM, CONCEPT AND THEORIES**

The rise of the extreme right in Western Europe has, according to (Solomos, 1996; Solomos & Back, 1996) resulted in a new form of racist politics or a particular form of nationalism. Essentially, this takes the form of the notion of inclusion and exclusion, where, inclusion is by virtue of the colour of skin, a shared history and language. On the other hand exclusion is based upon national origin, a different culture, religion or language. The effect of this difference is that the outsider experiences forms of racist violence, ideas and stereotypes. But where do these ideas come from? Nationalism at the end of the twentieth century is still an important social and political force that has an immediate and constant effect on peoples' lives. This is especially the case for people who have migrated to the UK and their



descendants who have experienced the negative effects of nationalism, and in the attempts to formulate concepts of their own ethnicity and identity. They are negotiating and reconstructing their own personal identity within the context of nationalist movements and ideologies.

Before looking at these issues in more detail I will first look at the concept of nationalisms and competing explanations.

In a *World in Action* Television interview Mrs Thatcher asserted that whites felt 'rather swamped' by people of an alien culture (Thatcher, 1978). This had the effect of reassuring the racist right that the new Conservative party was speaking for the 'white' majority on this issue. In reality, this meant those who were not white: black and Asian people and any others who did not fit her concept of those who originally belonged to UK (Solomos, 1989). Thatcher in effect, was emphasising her view of a common or shared history, customs, and what were seen to be certain values specific to Britons. Her statement reflected popular concerns about the effects immigration on the idea of the nation, its culture, heritage, education, work and employment. Nationalism, or rather the rhetoric of nationalism, was being articulated by a leader of a party who sought to preserve the majority culture and way of life i.e. the status quo against the undeniable changes in British society that the new migrant communities were effecting in their new home country.

There are essentially three competing theories of nationalism that are relevant here. First, is what (Anthias & Davis, 1993) calls the 'primordialist' view. The main proponents of this are Shils (Shils, 1957), Geertz (Geertz, 1963) and Van der Berghe (Van den Berghe, 1979). This view purports that the nation is somehow a natural and a universal phenomenon. It is an extension of social relationships between kin and small groups of people on a larger geo-political scale. The importance of this large-scale social relationship is assumed to have been historically ever present.

However, the second group that Anthias and Davis identify are the 'modernists' (Althusser, 1969; E. Hobsbawm, 1990). Their take on the issue is that it is the emergence of the nation-state that is peculiar to capitalism. Anderson and Gellner, are also termed as modernists, claim that 'nations are a direct result of particular



historical developments and that their beginnings can be located no earlier than eighteenth-century Europe' (Anthias & Davis, 1993:24).

Overall, (Anderson, 1983) argues that nationalisms are a result of the development encouraged via the technology of the printing press, which made available to a wider market popular notions of attachment to common cultures and allowed the development of 'imagined communities'. In these imagined communities people developed a common sense of community through the consumption of the same ideological and cultural printed material. This tended to replace the role of religion as a social force, and, it is argued, helped develop the idea of the nation, a national identity and consequently forms of nationalisms.

Smith however (Smith, 1979) argues that central to nationalism is a national identity that is potent and has long lasting influences on identities of a cultural collective. For Smith, it is the importance of an ethno-history, class structure and interstate systems that keeps humans bound in this cultural collective; all which serve to assure the continuation of national identity, with the effect of binding people together.

This is not too dissimilar to Guibernau who states that national identity is a result of 'a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself' (Guibernau, 1996:47). For Guibernau the key elements that are present in the formation of a national identity are psychological, where the group is conscious of commonality; cultural, where the signs and symbols of a group are recognised and understood; the political, where they have a system for self regulation and sustainable existence; and finally, historical, where they have a shared sense of past. Indeed, 'the sentiment of belonging to a community whose members identify with a set of symbols, beliefs and ways of life, and have the will to decide upon their common political destiny' (Guibernau, 1996:47). For Guibernau, the nation and nation state do not always coincide. The main difference is that members of a community or ethnic group are conscious of forming and keeping their community while the nation state seeks to create and develop a sense of community. The nation has a common ideology,



culture, values and symbols, the nation-state has as its objective the creation of common culture, symbols and values.

Consequently, members of a nation can see a common history, language and common or converging roots. As Giddens notes, 'affiliation of individuals to a set of symbols and beliefs emphasising the communality among members of a political order' (Giddens, 1985:116).

So where does this leave national identity for minorities in the UK?

### **National identity, identity and cultures**

It is argued by Guibernau that identity can be seen as a way in which the self establishes what and where the person is in both social and psychological terms; stemming from this a person gains an identity when it is situated in both the form of a social object through their membership or activity in social relations. (Guibernau, 1996). Therefore, in terms of developing a national identity the individual needs to experience or actualise their experience as an individual with a national identity. In other words the individual, as suggested above, belongs to a community with common meaning, symbols, history and values and language. This is similar to Durkheim's argument that ritual plays an important function in binding together people, be it through religion, civil society, values or being integrated into a collective, yet differentiated whole (Durkheim, 1915). This then begs the question as to how culture emerges and how people accept their adherence to a culture. Being born into a particular culture binds people early on into a collectivity that serves to inculcate particular values. This primary socialising role of the family (Parsons & Bales, 1955) is central to the development of a person's acceptance of and acceptance into a particular culture. The bonds that are created allow people to understand the ideological imperative to identify with a wider group and to imagine themselves as part of a wider community or nation (Anderson, 1983). Thus people accept the culture and identity of their wider group and that of their nation (Guibernau, 1996). Nevertheless, Baumeister is correct to point out that identity provides a means of differentiation from others, but that it also allows others to differentiate between those of a separate or different collective identity (Baumeister, 1986).



Central to this study is the notion of identity. It is a very complex and therefore problematic concept. The literature dealing with identity is vast, thus what I will do here is to present discussions around the terms. I will then move on to see what the literature says about religion and ethnicity as sources of identity. In general, social scientific analysis of identity falls into two broad categories (Jacobson, 1998). The first prioritises that which is distinct or unique about a person, the continuity of their person, or the individual's self-construal. The second category, which is where sociology and social psychology overlap, examines the area where a person's identity is as a result of the dialectic between society and the individual person and how social groupings and the individuals within them perceive themselves and others (Hutnick, 1985).

As has been mentioned above 'primordialists' such as Geertz (Geertz, 1963) and Stack (Stack, 1986) argue that there is a historical attachment of feeling to their communities and members of their community. Geertz states that these attachments are derived from given traits that are assumed to be natural; traits such as blood, language and customs, all serve to have an over-powering effect on peoples (Geertz, 1993). Similarly, Stack sees ethnicity as powerful identity which merges an individual with a particular group (Stack, 1986). This view of a static ethnicity is criticised by those called the instrumentalists (Jacobson, 1998). Here it is argued that 'within any given ethnic community, perceptions of origins, culture, significance and parameters of ethnicity are liable to enormous change over time; and all the more so, of course, when a group itself constitutes itself as a minority after a process of migration' (Jacobson, 1998:87).

The instrumentalists argue that an understanding of ethnic group formations and therefore identity are dependant upon fundamental economic, political and social factors. Thus, according to this view the strength of ties and identification with a particular group is result of 'elites' and ordinary members' manipulation for political or [and] economic purposes, of pre-existing cultural traditions and institutions (Jacobson, 1998). Proponents of this view are Cohen (Cohen, 1974; Dahya, 1974) and Glazer and Moynihan (Glazer & Moynihan, 1970).

Giddens however takes a different view. In essence, Giddens (Giddens, 1991) believes that the type of identity that people possess in the late modern age is one that



is reflexively constructed in the form of a personal narrative, which has the function of allowing them to understand their life and their role position in society. For Giddens, self-identity is shaped and altered and 'reflexively sustained in relation to rapidly changing circumstances of social life, on a local and global scale'. (Giddens, 1991:38). So a person's life is governed by the person's life politics. This life politics entails the power or the mental ability and capacity to make choice, and is essentially, the politics of choice. In short, in the post traditional society, global events and influences are central to the self (Giddens, 1991).

Eade and Albrow (Eade & Albrow, 1994) however take a different view to the above. They are what can be called 'constructionists'. By this I mean that that people have multiple identities, due to their membership of different groups, and organise the tension between these groups hierarchically. This implies

A 'fixed menu', which is derived from a reality external to the individual. For Eade et al identity for young Bangladeshis (and therefore, by extension, of other young South Asians) is that they are 'on their way to assimilation in the host community and, therefore, as having solved the problem of identity by taking on a new one. On the other hand, they are marginal to their community of origin and correspondingly faced with identity problems' (Eade & Albrow, 1994:10).

Successful persons living in what is not the culture of their parents are on their way to creating a new hybrid identity. 'That at least would correspond rather better to a historical paradigm, in which ethnicity is a construction over time, and where identity is always a negotiated outcome between two or more primordial communities, and where identity is always a negotiated outcome between two or normally many more agents' (Eade & Albrow, 1994:10-11). But this explanation is a variation on the theme of a fixed number of 'identity resources' for individuals, (Eade & Albrow, 1994) i.e. that there is a certain amount of situations where identity can be drawn from, and that this is contingent on one's ethnicity, gender, class, religion etc. They argue that their interview data shows that social identities have little concrete grounding and vary according to people and circumstances, thus generalisations are untenable. However, their work does show that there is a range of social identities that are identifiable, which are specific to their sample, as is the case with my theoretical sample population. For Eade et al this variety becomes of central interest



and they emphasise 'the management of identities' as central to their thesis (Eade & Albrow, 1994:11).

However, the debate around identity is further enhanced by those who Anthias calls the 'new hybridity theorists', such as Hall and Gilroy (Anthias, 2002). What they share is a 'concern developing an anti-essentialist framework for understanding culture and identity' (Anthias, 2002:29). Taking them one at a time Hall (Hall, 1992a, 1992b) is associated with what he terms new ethnicities. Here, ethnicity and therefore identity are a function of both what a person sees as their homeland and their country of settlement. In this situation an individual's identity is in a constant state of flux. The hybrid part of identity and ethnicity is 'more transethnic and transnational in character' (Anthias, 2002:29). So for South Asian Muslims, identity is not simply a function of their ethnicity, but 'is an amalgam, neither purely religious nor specifically ethnic' (Anthias, 2002:29). Gilroy however (Gilroy, 1993) sees the problem being more of one of diaspora as well as hybridity, hybridity which is expressed through distinct forms of music and performance. It is expressed as a double consciousness (Anthias, 2002).

The line taken by Hall is framed by both post-colonial discourse and postmodernism. The idea that identity and ethnicity are fixed, permanent and an essential feature of an ethnic group is rejected. Hall draws upon Lyotard (Lyotard, 1984) and Harvey (Harvey, 1989). Here Hall argues that the postmodern subject is a product of a wider predicament of contemporary societies in late modernity. This 'crisis' of late modern society results in established notions and ideas of identity, knowledge and reason are being challenged by voices from the margins. As a result of this, 'identity' as such is no longer fixed and certain for people, rather, there are competing, contesting and contradictory forces which are operating within people all at the same time. The social context is thus in a state of flux resulting in changing or mutating identity forms. As he states:

'... We feel we have a unified identity... because we construct a comforting story or 'narrative of the self' about ourselves... The fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead, as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities' (Hall, 1992a:: 1992b:).



However, what the above studies do not point to is the importance of religion in people's lives in the construction of their ethnicity, and this is what I will be looking at next.

## **THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND ITS RELATION TO ETHNICITY**

Durkheim (Durkheim, 1915) argued that religion has a social function. Where religion is a set of beliefs, practices and customs it has the function of binding people together through social ties which aid cohesiveness and the maintenance of social order. However, for Weber and Weberians it is the way individuals conceptualise their membership of religion and their position as a member of that religion that is important. This needs further examination, especially regarding South Asian Muslims as a minority community.

For Anwar (Anwar, 1990) the requirements in a 'Muslim charter of demands' were made by 'several national and regional Muslim organisations at the time of the 1987 general election, and included continuance of single-sex schools for both boys and girls as part of the state school system' (Anwar, 1990:334). Also of relevance was the teaching of their mother tongue. What is happening here is that this group, as defined by its religion is acting collectively. It is using its collective influence, for example in its response to the Rushdie Affair (1988-1989) and as resistance to racist attacks on Muslims in areas such as Bradford, Sheffield and East London. Here Muslims, using their membership of their religion as a dynamic rallying point to make demands, resist external vilification to collectivise against attacks on them as Muslims.

They act on the basis of being a group in themselves. The boundary between Muslims and non-Muslims is clearly marked and they use the religious component of their ethnicity as a rallying point. It is in this situation that Rex sees ethnicity as a political project (Rex, 1986; Rex & Mason, 1986).

But deeper than this is the idea that religion is at the core of their ethnic identity. It is the search for something uniquely Muslim which demarcates them from other South Asians such as Hindus or Sikhs. The basis of Sharia law and the revolution of cultural and social life around God has marked the collective identity that is so important for Neilsen (Neilsen, 1987). However what happens here is that



this ethnicity in terms of religion is being politicised, not by simply drawing up a boundary and maintaining it (Wallman, 1979a, 1979b). Identity, both religious and ethnic, is used as a tool for political struggle. the ethnicity here, in terms of religion is, according to Mason, situational (Mason, 1990a, 1990b). He argues have different ethnicities in different situations, which must embody the possibility of change over time (Mason, 1990a, 1990b).

So there is interplay, where ethnicity is the overall category that encapsulates the religion, and where religion is more intimate, the more closely it is bound to the individual South Asian Muslim. The question that arises is whether South Asians as a whole constitute an ethnic group or is it necessary to differentiate different South Asian Muslims groups (Punjabi, Bengali for instance). They have argued, as will be discussed later, that religion is at the core of their understanding and conceptualisation of their self, but that it does not take on a more political colour.

Religion, ethnicity and identity all are mediated through what is now seen as global forces. But what is globalisation? What are the major theories and debates?

## **THEORIES OF GLOBALISATION**

Globalisation is characterised by a change in the nature of relations between the states, regions and continents all over the world. It is now difficult to examine a particular society or country without at least some reference to the politics, history or economic relations with another society. For instance, South Asian Muslims are here, in Britain for many reasons, whether it be as cheap immigrant labour (Castles & Kosack, 1985), whether it is as a result of them wishing to improve their situation through furthering their education (R. Desai, 1963), or through a process of chain migration (Anwar, 1979, 1985). Whatever the reasons, what is clear is that it is through histories, economics, political and cultural (read post-colonial) ties that Britain has a South Asian and therefore a South Asian Muslims presence. These forces have acted upon a global scale and are a central part of the globalisation process.

One of the central debates in globalisation theory is that between Turner and Giddens and the crux of the debate is over the nature of society. For Turner societies are seen through post-modern spectacles, where he sees postmodernism as:



'an intellectual movement in social thought and as a cultural criticism of modernism... the social condition of modern societies which are going through a process of postmodernism' (Turner, 1994:186-187).

Turner says that it characterised by three factors. First is cultural differentiation. Secondly, the growth of urban multiculturalism as a consequence of processes of globalisation, and thirdly, the prevalence of certain stylistic devices in culture, such as simulation, parody, and irony. So, Turner argues that, if this is postmodernism, then Giddens has rejected it. Indeed, 'postmodernism as an analytical concept which explains the transformation of modern culture (Turner, 1994). Thus the reflexive self is seen by Giddens as the core feature of 'general progress of detraditionalization in high modernity' (Turner, 1994:187).

Giddens argues that we are living in a society in which profound changes have occurred. Thus, old classical sociological theories no longer hold, or indeed can hold, and consequently there is a need for a new theoretical outlook. By doing this with high modernity and reflexive identity, Giddens is rejecting the postmodernist view. Therefore, the debate between Giddens and Turner is;

'...the detraditionalization and the radicalization of the self is a social struggle between different theoretical groupings in sociology, namely those who believe that modernity is best understood as risk society [*Beck*] or as a reflexive modernity [*Giddens*], and those who believe that the post modernization is the dominant feature of change and that the condition of *posthistoire* most adequately characterizes our epoch'. (Turner, 1994:187)

So, why according to Giddens is classical sociology an inadequate starting point for the analysis of late modern society? Classical sociology says 'societies' are synonymous with nation-states, thus they are inadequate in a globalised modern world.

Turner rejects Giddens analysis mainly because it ignores questions of embodiment and assumes a one-dimensional view of secularisation. The first issue that Turner raises is relevant to the argument as far as the self is concerned. In traditional society (pre-modern) Christianity sought to forgo the flesh, whereas today the reverse is in operation, for instance, dieting, the search and use of 'anti-ageing'



preparations, the body as the centre of aesthetic importance is, according to Turner (Turner, 1994), the result of the body or self as a project. This however is not too distinct from Giddens view point, who argues that this has become part of an institutional reflexivity that is symptomatic of late modernity. Indeed, the aesthetic nature of the body and self has been a concern for traditional or 'authentic' Islam, hence proscriptions which address personal hygiene, proper dress, and the aesthetics of the body are not new. For instance the religious requirement for women to cover their hair, which in Arab culture (was and is) seen as the most desirable of female physical attributes (Mernissi, 1985). Thus Giddens is not far wrong in suggesting that it is the dynamism of late modernity that marks the break from the traditional.

The point Turner makes is about the lack of a concept of secularisation. The reflexive self is not incompatible with either the secular or non secular personality. For the secular, reflexive identity, as far as a second generation South Asian Muslim are concerned, is still referential to the late modern, and the late modern here refers to a Eurocentric view. Secularism (and the impact of late modernity) cannot presuppose the centrality of the 'Western' (Giddens, 1991). Secularism is to be found in people who are characterised by aesthetic instrumental rationality, and who, to all intents and purposes are secularised, but *believe* and touch religion only when encountering major life events such as death, birth, marriage etc. It is extremely difficult to distinguish between the religious and the cultural. This is true also of 'white English' people, who have had little contact with the church, except at occasions of death, birth, marriage, but still consider themselves as separate from religion, i.e. secular. Therefore Giddens allows for secular activity and the processes of secularisation.

So, essentially, globalisation is characterised as a move from modernity to high modernity (Giddens, 1991) while for Turner, it is part of a process of a move from old certainties of the past towards a postmodern future (Turner, 1994). However, the debate around the nature of globalisation is more complex than that, with other theorists emphasising different aspects. The debates around what is termed globalisation have been raging since at least the 1970s (Moore, 1966; Nettle & Robertson, 1968). Globalisation as a concept is distinct in taking the entire globe as the primary unit of analysis and analysing the globe as a social system. The result of



this is that subunits such as nations, states, peoples, organisations and religions need to be looked at not in relation to the wider social environment, but, rather, through a global perspective. Globalisation looks at them as social forms not only in relation to other social forms but with reference to the whole. According to (Robertson, 1992a, 1992b) and (Wallerstein, 1987) globalisation is a new analytical tool that allows a global perspective on the sub-units mentioned above.

I will now look at the theories of globalisation of Wallerstein, Meyer and Robertson. I will be looking at how these theorists conceptualise globalisation and contribute to the concept.

Wallerstein's world-system theory argues that history and politics can only be understood in terms of economic and material base. Indeed, for Wallerstein, a social system is defined by the existence of a division of labour, such that the various sectors or areas are dependant upon economic exchange with others for smooth and continuous provisioning of the needs of the area (Wallerstein, 1974). This Marxist conceptualisation of the world argues that there are three types of social system, mini-systems, world-empires and world-economies. The world-empires and world economies have absorbed the mini-systems of a single division of labour and a single cultural system. The world-empires have many concurrent cultural systems but a single political system within a single division of labour. Examples of such past world empires are those of Rome, Egypt and China. On the other hand world-economies have within their many separate political and cultural systems a single division of labour. However, in the modern world-systems, the world-empires have ceased existence, being superseded by the development of a single world economy, which for the first time in history includes a global empire. The distinguishing feature of the modern world-economy is that it is the only one, [so far] to avoid collapse and absorption by a world empire (Wallerstein, 1987).

Wallerstein argued that Europe created its own world-economy through the construction of its own geographical division of the core, periphery and semiperiphery (Wallerstein, 1979). The new economy of European world-economy led to the rise of nation-states. The core sector had capital concentrated within it and dominated the system, whereas the periphery provided raw materials and cheap labour. In the centre of this system is the semiperiphery, which is exploited by the



core and in turn exploits the periphery. It functions as a buffer between the core and the periphery.

Essentially, Wallerstein sees the global social system as united by the economy, i.e. the modern world system is in reality a capitalist world economy. As a result of this the political and cultural manifestations within the world-system are based upon the economic base. Thus, this version of globalisation provides a materialistic, neo-Marxist analysis of world economies and political and cultural aspects of globalisation.

The view of Wallerstein's world-systems theory was examined by Meyer (1980). What Meyer et al did was to apply a quantitative analysis to Wallerstein's world-system model. In this sense Meyer et al accept the basic premise of Wallerstein's structure of the world-economy and the world-political system is based and dependent upon the world-economy. Meyer et al however argue that the world-political system 'is linked closely to the rise and expansion of the world commodity economy, but it also acts to restructure and alter this economy, and to transform social life' (Meyer, 1980:109). The significance of this is that Meyer et al deny that the global world-system is essentially a world-economic system and that the economy can not explain the independent power and influence of the nation-state and the variation of cultural and social systems within the individual nation-states.

For Meyer et al the economy is just that, the economy. It does not encapsulate the political or the social. What their studies have shown is that there have emerged strong central states which occur both in the core and semiperiphery. For instance Meyer argues that world culture holds together a world that is decentralised. The carriers or communicators of cultures bridge the gap between the nation and the globe. 'They are members both of their own societies and of a world elite and are protected by their wider cultural status and by the legitimated international organizational networks in which they operate' (Meyer, 1980:131). For example, Meyer can see the role of religion and cultural processes as a source of cultural authority, which is distinct from the material and economic base; thus, what Meyer achieves is an important move away from the economic monism of Wallerstein. But, what Meyer does not do so well is to actually explain how the global world is



conceived. This is an important contribution of Roland Robertson to whom I will now turn.

Robertson takes a different view to the theorists that I have outlined above. His distinct focus is upon critical questions in the classical debate, i.e. the relation between the individual and society under modern conditions and the importance of different kinds of society. Tönnies describes this as *Gemeinschaft* and *Gessellschaft* (Tönnies, 1963), or loosely translated, community and society. In classical discussion the move from pre-modern to modern society has been characterised as a shift from *Gemeinschaft* or communal forms of living to *Gessellschaft* or a structured or organised society. A feature of this development is the role of the individual which has changed from one of similarity to one of differentiation (Simmel, 1971), or for Durkheim, how society can cope and survive with this differentiation (Durkheim, 1933). Robertson argues that the inherent tension between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gessellschaft* is replicated between societies in the modern world rather than within them (Robertson, 1992a, 1992b). In more detail people, as individuals have moved from networks of kinship and communality, *Gemeinschaft*, to one where there is a much greater degree of differentiation of the individual and society, *Gessellschaft*. Thus, in modern society, there are two distinct poles of identity for individuals, the first is the realm of societal-systemic functionality and secondly the realm of the individual and relational being (Robertson & Chirico, 1985). This duality is complicated by the processes of globalisation that puts societies within a wider system of societies. As a result there is the relativisation of societies and individuals. Globally, norms and values within one society are confronted by those of another. Thus, globalization for Robertson is a process that is bringing about one social world, and central to this is the 'relativisation of all self/society dualisms with reference to an encompassing world-system-of-societies-/humankind dualisms' (Beyer, 1994:27).

In using the term 'globalization' I refer to the overall process by which the entire world becomes increasingly interdependent, so as to yield a 'single place'. We could even go so far as to call the latter a 'world society', as long as we do not suggest by that term that nationally constituted societies are disappearing' (Robertson, 1989:8).



Robertson argues that within globalisation there are conflicting images, for example, from Islamic societies to Japan they are different and distinct to those of the West. This tension for legitimacy and supremacy results in 'telic' concerns: global discourse on the ends of humanity in the light of the relativization of particularisms' (Beyer, 1994:27). This is the prime result of globalisation for Robertson.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

In this review of the literature I have put together the themes of 'race', racism, ethnicity, nationalism, national identity, the role of religion and the importance of globalisation. What I have said is that in order to understand the social context of South Asian Muslims in Britain it is necessary to look at the debates around these issues. So, first to state that South Asians are not a distinct 'race' and that Muslims from this region have an identity that is bound by not only their geographical place of origin, but also by their allegiance to Islam. This forms a boundary around them that is reflected in their ethnic and religious identity, which is a result of them being in contact with a white and secular Britain, who, have themselves, particular national identities. However, the issue of ethnic and religious identities is mediated through global forces that have caused their migration and consequently their settlement and experience of life in Britain. These are themes that I will be examined throughout the rest of the thesis.



## **CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The issue of methodology is an essential part of the thesis. The methodology is the link between theory and data, and this is especially so in the methodology that is used here. In this chapter I will be describing and discussing the following aspects of issues of methodology, the theoretical rationale for choosing grounded theory, the efficacy of the methods used the politics and ethics of the method used. I will then turn to practical issues that I encountered while conducting this study. Finally I will show how issues of generalisation and reliability can be, to an extent, overcome by combining grounded theory and Giddens' theory of globalisation, to show that such ethnography is not necessarily confined to small-scale research.

Qualitative research, or any research method for that matter should be guided by the type of questions that the researcher is asking, i.e., the choice of methodology should be problem led. Indeed, as Hughes and Ackroyd put it, 'it is the nature of the research problem that should dictate the appropriate research method' (Ackroyd & Hughes, 1992:30).

### **THE RATIONALE FOR UTILISING QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY & THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The central problem here is to examine the process of the social construction of religious and ethnic identity for second generation South Asian Muslims. This group have particular issues and situations that are not common to other groups in British society, but also have much in common with those other groups. The research centred on the problems (and opportunities) that second generation South Asian Muslims encountered in their daily lives.

In sociology it is not always possible to start out with a theory which is to be investigated or tested, but as Strauss suggests that a way around this problem is to clarify the research problems before the start of the fieldwork (Strauss, 1970).



This was an important issue in this research. One of the reasons for this is that the literature is very poor and did not examine these particular research problems. This methodology, in following Glaser and Strauss was to generate theory from the data, which is generated by more traditional data generation techniques, i.e. unstructured interviews (B Glaser, 1978).

The immediate question is how the research question is going to be operationalised, i.e. how am I going to discover what I want to find out. The obvious technique is to use in-depth interviews, the reason being that it presents the opportunity to discover the attitudes, motivations, and ultimately the behaviour of the respondents, in their own words. It is precisely the fact that they can explain and describe things; in their own words, their view or interpretation of their world and their construction of their worldview which is allowed by ethnography. It allows elucidation of their actions, attitudes, behaviour, whether this is consistent with their statements and views or not. This technique allows, without the imposition of the researchers framework of thought the interviewee the power to define, in their own terms, their views on their lives, and ultimately, how they view and conceptualise their religious and ethnic identity.

The process of in-depth interviewing, briefly is, that the interviewer, to a certain degree, directs the discussion on particular issues. The key point is that the interviewee is allowed to talk about what s/he feels is important, even if this means going off at a tangent. This allows, within time and other constraints, the motives, intentions and thoughts to emerge. This allows a fuller picture of the thoughts and motives of the interviewee to point to perspectives that they may have a unique view on, that which the researcher did not think of.

The main advantage of this technique is the high degree of validity of the data. The data is in sufficient detail...

‘...for the results to be taken as true, correct; complete In-depth interviewing allows the discovery of motivation and allows the expansion of on factors that the interviewee would not have thought of, which has considerable importance for the interviewee. This is not possible from quantitative data and allows an examination of



behaviour at the micro-interaction level and believable reports of their views and experiences' (Ackroyd & Hughes, 1992:30).

However, one of the main conventional criticisms of this technique is the low reliability of the data and whether the interviewee is telling the truth (or hiding things). This I will show below is tempered by incorporating the data analysis technique of grounded theory (B Glaser & Strauss, 1967) with Giddens' theory of globalisation (Giddens, 1991, 1993). The amalgamation of these two theories allows generalisation to a wider and similar group of second generation South Asian Muslims.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research design is 'the point at which questions raised in theoretical or policy debates are converted into operational research projects and research programmes which will provide answers to these questions' (Hakim, 1994:xi).

The research design is a process, which started out the research project and developed as the study progressed. There are a number of issues here;

### **Foreshadowing the problem.**

This entails the use of my own experience and knowledge of the community what the broad issues are, i.e. the construction of ethnic and religious identity among second generation South Asian Muslims. This leads to what type of methodology is to be used. Then one has to look at the population that is to be studied and what sort of sample has to be drawn and how.

### **Pre-Field Work**

The aim in pre-field work in the early stages of data collection was to seek out issues that were of major concern to second generation South Asian Muslims and their construction of ethnic and religious identity, or in their terms, how they see themselves and their place in society. One of the ways in which this was done was to construct a questionnaire on ethnic identity. This was set out to do the following.<sup>7</sup> To find out biographical details, e.g. age, sex, where born, parents origin, and religious

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<sup>7</sup> See appendices for questionnaire.



affiliation and where they are located within the socio-economic structure by asking about their parent's occupations and incomes. Their family's religious affiliation was asked for in particular what sect they belonged to. What the student's religious affiliation was and if it was the same as their parents. What their attitude was to religion; i.e. whether they were 'believers' or not. They were asked whether they had any nationality affiliations, i.e. whether they considered themselves to be English, British, and Pakistani etc.

This postal survey had a number of advantages. It screened out people with whom I did not want to speak and identified those I did. It gave me brief biographical details, which I can use to sort out interviews in terms of sex, class etc. the questionnaire allows a first point of unobtrusive contact, establishing that they were randomly selected and that I was a bona fide researcher. Once this questionnaire was constructed then the researcher had to deal with 'gatekeepers' and gaining 'access' to the students.

### **Selecting settings and cases**

Since I am looking at second generation South Asian Muslims the population that I was looking at was very large, so, a compromise was to choose students, and the reasons for this are;

It allowed me to select 'self defined' South Asian Muslims.<sup>8</sup> From university records, i.e. admission forms there is a section on ethnic monitoring which lists various ethnic groups and asks enrolling students to tick certain boxes which indicate different nationality origin boxes. This self-selection allows students to classify themselves. It allows complete anonymity. The advantage of this was that only those who had described themselves as Indian, Pakistani, or Bangladeshi would be contacted.

For more pragmatic reasons the group selected were all second-generation children of migrants who came in after 1950. It also meant that there would be a spread of class, gender, country(s) of origin, course they are on. As London Guildhall University draws students mainly from the South East of England it

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<sup>8</sup> Being self-defined has the advantage that it is the students themselves who define their ethnic origin, within the parameters set out by the university enrolment form.



allowed a cross section of students within a particular age range to be selected. Since the respondents were all students (undergraduate) it would reduce travel time and costs, and allow the convenience of interviews being conducted in the university on the days that the students would normally be in, thus reducing the number of 'no shows'.<sup>9</sup>

### **Issues of Population**

According to Babbie 'the population for a study is that group (usually of people) about whom we want to be able to draw conclusions' (Babbie, 1992:107).

So here the population refers to all the *self-defined* South Asians. They have to be self-defined as this data is obtained from the university enrolment form on which there is a section on ethnic identity<sup>10</sup>. From this I conducted a blind mail shot of a questionnaire (see appendix 6) to 200 students who defined themselves as South Asian. From this mail I selected all those who were South Asian Muslims. So the population from which I drew my sample was the 'aggregate of all cases that conforms to some designated set of specifications' (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992:107).

By the definitions of Babbie and Nachmias the population here refers to all second generation South Asian Muslims, however it is impossible to quantify this in a reliable way, as access to university records is not allowed according to the Data Protection Act. Even if were allowed there would be no population as the question about religion is not on the enrolment form. It would also be racist and unethical to ask such questions in the first place.

So the population refers to the total number of second generation South Asian Muslims in the university's student body even though the magnitude of this population is unknown. However, despite this problem this is not a major hindrance to the research. As in any ethnographic technique it is not scientific reliability that is a key feature of, but rather the validity using postal questionnaire. This allows students to define themselves within a particular ethnic group that would point to a

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<sup>9</sup> There was a drop out rate, from interviews of about 10%. This figure only included those students, who, on contact by me, agreed to be interviewed. The reason given for refusal of interviews was mainly lack of time.

<sup>10</sup> It is not possible to ascertain the religion of the student from the enrolment form as there is no question which asks about religion.



high validity. This also circumvents the potential problem of the *definition of the population*.

## **PROCESS OF CHOOSING THE SAMPLE**

The postal questionnaire method was chosen primarily because of factors in accessing the students themselves if for instance one were to use a questionnaire distributed directly to the students then it would for a number of reasons have 'poisoned' the research atmosphere. For instance, the research issue of Muslim identity is particularly sensitive, especially in the context of the problems of relation between the university authorities and the Islamic Society of the London Guildhall University. However, what is taken into account was the socio-political climate of Muslim students' society, who, at the time were involved in various campaigns within the university covering such issues such as the availability of prayer rooms, special provision for Friday prayers, and the inevitable reverberations of the Rushdie Affair. In this light a university researcher who, to all intents and purposes is secular, opposed to the campaigns and is against of the infiltration of the Islamic Society by the Hizb-ut-Tahrir would, I believe would have been denied access to the very people who are to be studied.

So, rather than using an obtrusive method of gaining access such as the direct approach it was decided to target the subjects individually, that is, by post where there a degree of anonymity was guaranteed for the researcher.

### **Access via the university records department, access and gatekeepers**

Approaches were made initially made by my research supervisor who informed me that it would not be possible to gain access to the university records of enrolled students due to the framework of the Data Protection Act (1984). It was agreed that a sample questionnaire and a covering letter would be sent to the records department for inspection (see appendix 2). It was discussed with university records department that using a computer programme they would identify those students who described themselves as Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi on the enrolment form. This having been agreed a package was sent out with four items enclosed.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See 2,3,4, and 5 appendix for these documents



1. Covering letter from the University records department.
2. A covering letter from the researcher.
3. The screening questionnaire.
4. A stamp addressed envelope.

The response rate over the next three months was approximately 45% i.e. 90 questionnaires were returned, of which approximately sixty were usable. They were usable because the students were South Asian Muslims, and of these forty were interviewed.

## **SAMPLING AND SELF ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRES**

Here I will look at the sampling method and explain how the interviewees were chosen from the results of the questionnaire. In addition to this I will look at how this sample related to those interviews found as a result of 'snowballing'

### **How the interviewees were chosen from the results of the questionnaire**

The process of selecting the sample to research involved negotiating with the university authorities to grant access to the student database that held details of the self-categorisation of ethnic background on the enrolment forms. The initial approach was made to the Director of Planning and Management Information (Appendix 1) to gain access to this database. I was then referred to the university's student records department (Appendix 2). From the university's student records department I requested a contact list of current students who had, in the ethnic monitoring section of the form, ticked Bangladeshi, Indian or Pakistani. I was not however permitted an electronic or hard copy with the contact details because of the Data Protection Act. My writing to the university records department explaining that I was researching South Asian students in the university circumvented this problem. However, as the students' religion was not on the enrolment form I designed a screening survey that asked questions about themselves, their ethnic, socio-economic and religious background. This was enclosed within the interview invitation pack (Appendices 3, 4, 5 & 6) and sent it to the university records department who then sent it to 200 randomly selected students. Of these 200 questionnaires, I received 60 back, of which



only 40 were from students who were both South Asian and Muslim. Of these, I eventually interviewed 20. 15 more students were recruited through the snowballing technique. This entailed asking my interviewees whether there was anyone who they thought may be interested in being part of the research. Though this sample was to some extent, self-selecting, I thought it gave an insight into the range of ideas and views of South Asian Muslim students. The last five students were obtained through my engagement in the Islamic society, for example, going to meetings and participating in prayers with them. The numbers of students obtained from the different sources is detailed in the table below.

Table 1 Source of interviewees

	Screening questionnaire	Snowball sampling	Through participant observation	Total  N
Students recruited by	20	15	5	N=40

## THE INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

### The rationale for interviewing

Within the realm of the research problem, i.e. the conceptualisation of religious and ethnic identity, the epistemological assumptions and basis for the study points firmly at a qualitative or ethnographic technique of investigation. In addition to this and for reasons outlined above the method of participant observation would not be appropriate. Also ethical reasons prevail in that some of the potential research subjects are students of the researcher. There are a number of issues that point to the unstructured interview as the most appropriate method of investigation.



‘Individuals can report on what they feel, are, have, tell others about their lives, disclose what their hopes and fears are, offer their opinions, state what they believe in, say what they did last week...In short, they can impart masses of information about themselves’ (Ackroyd & Hughes, 1992:102).

Having said this, it is the research problem that dictated what method(s) should or should not be used. In this particular case the main reasons is that there is little previous literature in the field, therefore it is not possible to build upon previous work, thus, theory has to be generated to fill this gap in knowledge. Second, the theoretical starting point for the research was Weber’s interactionist perspective (Weber, 1978) and third the ethnicity of the researcher would allow easier access to the students in participant observation situations.

In more detail the first reason, that of the paucity of literature it was seen as necessary to have a methodology that would allow the generation of theory. As the theory is new it has to be located within the ‘world view’ of the research participants. This is essentially an epistemological argument that leads to the use of grounded theory. Using this technique the theory ‘emerges’ from the data and thus the researcher is not confined to current paradigms that encapsulate concepts of ethnicity and identity.

The research project was conceived within a symbolic interactionist perspective because the objective of the research was to ‘reach the actual human experiences and attitudes which constitute the full, live and actual reality beneath the formal organisation of social institutions’ (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1927:1834). For the students it is conceived that their realities are self-generated not only by themselves but also as a result of the groups and cultures that they belong to. This gives meaning to their roles and helps to define and re-define their situations in ways that were real to them (Swingewood, 1991).

This is what is seemed to have happened in most instances, however, in some interviews the interviewee knew my political stance on various issues and this could have had an effect, indeed, one particular interviewee tried to convert me to his cause!



The issue of gender did not, apparently, pose any real problem as far as I can see. However there are issues that, as a male researcher, are outside my frame of reference. Thus, without the knowledge of gender specific issues or these being outside my worldview it is not possible to ask.

The interviewees themselves commented on the interview process for what it meant for them. Comments such as them; 'being exhausted from the experience', or 'never having thought about these things before', or 'I feel as if I have been through a counselling session' and finally, 'felt that it was a cathartic experience'.

Much of these comments could be attributed to the ease and rapport developed during the interview and the understanding of the interviewer of the issues and concepts that would need detailed explanation to a non Asian Muslim. Thus they felt that they did not need to explain every concept and idea.

Issues of trust, rapport and equality are a central concern during the process of the interview (Ackroyd & Hughes, 1992) and this becomes even more important when discussing highly personal, taboo and 'unislamic' issues. It was discovered early on sexuality was a topic that could not be readily be discussed as this closed down certain interviewees. But, issues of sex and alcohol for instance did become accessible once the interview had progressed and a comfortable working relationship was built up. I found that it is best to hint at an issue and see if the interviewee picked up and expanded on it, which in many cases they did. This I believe was due to the rapport built up and the making the interviewee feels at ease at the start of the interview.

### **The interview opening**

The interview room was set out as below and other research students were not in the room during the interviews. Also a 'do not disturb' notice was posted on the door to prevent interruptions.

While there was openness between the two there was always a desk behind which to retreat (for the interviewee) if they felt uncomfortable. The initial 'chit-chat' stage covered an introduction, and explanation of the study, issues of confidentiality and anonymity. Basically there was a high degree of informed consent. I told them



exactly what the study was about and their role in it. I would then run through the screening questionnaire to check their biographical details and to ease into the interview itself. I would then ask for his or her permission to tape record the interview (no one refused).

The opening question would be a broad general question 'tells me about your family'. This allows them to tell me whatever they thought was important and it would put them in a position of control from the start. So initially all the questions and issues are quite tame... 'a good idea to ask relatively innocuous questions early so that both parties can become used to each other more quickly' (Ackroyd & Hughes, 1992:109). So, questions about their family and themselves are issues, which are easy and will, be developed further as the 'private' situations (family, marriage, community etc).

### **The interview Middle**

This is where the more sensitive topics are introduced, ideally from the interviewee themselves, which are then picked up by the interviewer. It is here that the confidence increases of *both* the interviewee and interviewer with each other and the social interaction develops into a one sided conversation (one the interviewees side). It is here that certain hypothesis or opinions can be tested. However it is still important to keep some degree of tacit control of the interview and be able to recognise important points or probe and push further on particular points.

### **The interview The Closing**

The final part is to close the interview. It is time to ask the interviewee if there was anything that they wished to ask me. This is done to ensure a degree of reciprocity and allows the interviewee some comeback on what they may have said and on what I may have missed out. The interviewee is told that the interview would last for about 45 minutes. It became apparent after the first two interviews that this was inaccurate, since most lasted more than an hour. The reason for this misinformation was simply not to put students off coming to the interview.

At the close, when the tape is switched off it is usual to ask if any of their colleagues would like to be interviewed; their names were taken and then contacted.



Notes were taken as to the general demeanour of the interviewee, if for instance if they were comfortable, open, or resistant to questioning. Also what they were wearing. For example if a woman claimed to be deeply religious but was dressed in Western clothing or if a man had a beard then this was noted and added to the subsequent interview transcript.

## **GROUNDED THEORY AS A TOOL OF ANALYSIS**

For Norman Denzin grounded theory is perhaps the most influential paradigm for qualitative research in contemporary social sciences (Blumer, 1978; Denzin, 1978, 1992). Many theoretical qualitative perspectives focus upon the experience of humans in the social world as a tool for understanding the life experiences of actors. For instance, ethnography focuses on culture, ethnomethodology looks at the everyday life of the actor, while symbolic interactionism looks at the role of symbolic meaning in the lives of people and phenomenology looks at the lived experience of people. Grounded theory, on the other hand, looks at the processes of generating theory, rather than looking at a particular theoretical context. Grounded theory employs a constant comparative method and theoretical sampling in order to construct a theory, which allows general statements about the particular social situation, or context that is being examined.

The construction of theory is a central concern in qualitative methodology literature (Becker, 1977; Denzin, 1978; B Glaser, 1978; Lofland, 1971; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Whyte, 1978). For them the aim of methodologists is the task of the construction of theory and its verification. The key here is that the construction of this theory is on inductive methods of constructing the theory as opposed to deduction from *a priori assumptions*. Indeed,

‘we have taken the position that the adequacy of a theory...cannot be divorced from the process by which it was generated. Thus one canon for judging the usefulness of a theory is how it is generated –and we suggest that it is likely to be a better theory to a degree that it has been inductively developed from social research. Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of research’ (B Glaser & Strauss, 1967:30).



Grounded theory depends upon a methodology where the researcher is within and close to the world of the research subjects so that what is discovered, found and observed is grounded in the empirical world. Blumer argues essentially that the empirical social world as the object of study has to be examined and one has to get close enough to what is going on within it (Blumer, 1978). He uses the metaphor of the veil, which hides or masks this social world, and the task of scientific enquiry is to lift this veil that covers an area of group life. The lifting of this veil is achieved by getting close to the area and by digging deep through careful study. Indeed, for Blumer methods that do not allow this are betraying this principle of naturalistic study, i.e. that it respects and stays close to the empirical domain.

In general, grounded theory aims to build theory rather than testing it and provides a method for handling large amounts of data and then providing a framework for the logical and systematic sense-making of data. For Corbin & Strauss this process finally elucidates the concepts that are the building blocks of theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For Patton, grounded theory opens the door to many areas of social scientific research, especially for doctoral dissertations because of the 'overt emphasis on the importance of and specific procedures for generating theory... and that it unabashedly admonishes the researcher to strive for 'objectivity'' (Patton, 2002). Patton argues that the postmodern attack on objectivity is now to be found in qualitative research through constructivism, hermeneutic interpretivism, and upon emphasising the subjective phenomenological experience. Patton says that those social scientists who use this method, which involves in-depth interviewing and observation, find comfort in the attention that this method pays to objectivity.

Further to this Charmaz compared objectivist (or reality orientated) and constructivist approaches to grounded theory and she found that most grounded theory is objectivist in orientation (Charmaz, 2000). In other words, grounded theory is best understood in terms of a realist and objectivist orientation, 'emphasising the disciplined and procedural ways of getting the researcher's biases out of the way but adding healthy doses of creativity to the analytical processes.' (Patton, 2002)



### **What are the methods or procedure of grounded theory?**

The sequence or procedure for generating theory that is buried in qualitative data such as observation and unstructured interview transcripts in some sense draws upon the basic ingredients of analytic induction (Turner, 1981).

1. After exposure in the field and collection of (interview) data, the researcher develops categories which describe the issues emerging
2. The categories are then 'saturated', i.e. the data does not generate any more descriptive categories
3. The researcher then abstracts a more general formulation of the category, as well as specifying the criteria for inclusion in that category
4. These general definitions guide the researcher and stimulate further reflection
5. This sensitises the researcher to connections between emerging general categories and other milieu
6. The researcher becomes aware of connections between categories
7. The emerging relationships between the categories are compared repeatedly in order to test (by analytical induction) the validity of the categories and therefore the theory.

In other words, the theory is derived from fieldwork, is refined, tested and elaborated to higher levels of abstraction towards the end of the data collection.

### **What are the advantages to grounded theory?**

Grounded theory has many positive features that have established it as an important, widely used and accepted theory. For instance, it provides a framework for the researcher to organise and manage large amounts of data and allows the development of categories and consequently theory that explains, describes and analyses social situations and action as described through the interview data. These



findings are cross checked and cross analysed across all the interview data. What emerges is clearly recognisable by the research subjects themselves (which is found out through informal discussion with the students some time after the interview process has been completed), thus formalising and grounding the actions and thoughts of the research subjects *within* their everyday lives. Following this, the utility of grounded theory method is to allow theory or abstracted generalisations to emerge from the organised and categorised data, so, as the data is drawn from observations and/or interviews, then it follows that the data and, therefore, the theory keeps in touch with its empirical referent.

This initial atheoretical approach is utilised by theorists in various fields of research. For instance, Hammersley, Scarth and Webb (Hammersley, Scarth, & Webb, 1985) in their research on the implications of external assessment on two secondary schools. They wanted to establish whether external examinations led to lecturing and note-taking on the part of teachers and to rote learning by the pupils. Their approach showed that some of their initial assumptions were incorrect. Indeed, one of the benefits of the technique they used was that it provided a structured way for the vast amounts of data generated to be managed in a structured and useful way. In addition, there was an element of experimental design where the constant comparison of contrasting groups allowed the exposure of key differences between them. The strategy was highly flexible in that it allowed them to make changes in direction based upon the emerging data, which made it very different to any experimental method. Also, Cressey in studying embezzlement found this method useful in data collection and analysis (Cressey, 1953).

Glaser & Strauss (B Glaser, 1978; B Glaser & Strauss, 1967) have argued that grounded theory can be used in qualitative social research in such a way that theory testing is not necessary, because theory based on data can usually not be completely refuted by more data or replaced by another theory. Since it is intimately linked to data, it is destined to last despite its inevitable modification and reformulation (B Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

This is problematic, say critics of grounded theory such as Ford who argues that it is doubtful if the testing or the refining of the hypothesis can be excluded from the process of developing the theory (Ford, 1975). So, how can it be seen if the



theory is developing in the direction that fits with the data if the hypothesis is not tested at various stages of the process. It must be seen as a check on the development of the theory that at each stage there is some degree of testing, so that the formal or substantive theory holds some validity. Bulmer (Bulmer, 1979) on the other hand argues the *tabula rasa* view of enquiry, i.e. that the researcher is a blank slate upon which new observations and category construction start afresh with each project. I agree, it is difficult for researchers to start afresh, however, if that data is to generate theory, then there has to be some suspension of pre-conceptions regarding a particular social situation so that the data can 'speak for itself' through the generated categories. In addition to this, Bulmer argues that the creation or construction of categories appears uncontrolled and that it is not clear when this should stop. It is, actually quite clear. Category construction should stop *when the researcher*, through their increasing amount of data, feels that the category has become 'saturated', in other words, there is little more that can be added by developing new categories as there is a sufficient range of data for a particular category to draw up contrasts and similarities of a particular social phenomenon. This approach of category saturation can be confirmed through different forms of data collection for example, observation or interviews.

Other critiques of grounded theory suggest that grounded theory is not actually a 'theory' (Brown, 1973; Williams, 1976) and that the link between theory and data is not made explicit, or, as Rose suggested whether the theory construction is linked closely to the field research (Rose, 1982). These criticisms are somewhat misleading. To counter Brown and Williams, grounded theory is a process of the construction of theory, which reflects and represents the grounded reality of the research participants, so while grounded theory may not be a theory in the formal sense, it is the abstract methods and procedures that allow the construction of theory, indeed, more so than positivist approaches.

### **The use of grounded theory in the thesis**

Based upon observations and interviews, it is concluded that there are processes in operation that are not easily identifiable, therefore sometimes appear inexplicable. So, epistemologically the process of observation and inference leads to further investigation with findings leading to inductive conclusions. This enables one to



arrive at a particular theory of knowledge and coupled with the fact that there is very little literature on second generation South Asian Muslims, from a sociological point of view one has to look at a method of actually generating theory that suited to its supposed uses, which is generated by logical deduction from *a priori* assumptions (B Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

This, in turn, points to the location of data within a social context and that the data itself is not developed from a value free environment. It results, certainly in this case, from a particular type of interaction, the unstructured interview. The issue here is the interpretive nature(s) of social research, or more particularly, the reflexive nature of ethnographic techniques, grounded theory in particular, as an inductive ethnographic technique.

The *recognition* of the reflexivity of ethnography (and by extension all sociological research) is for Hammersley an important step as reflexivity is an existential fact (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Indeed, 'there is no way we can escape the social world in order to study it...We cannot avoid relying on 'common sense' knowledge nor, often, can we avoid having an effect on the social phenomenon we study' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983:15).

So, rather than assume that the research is value free and absolutely unadulterated it is important here to recognise the reflexivity within the research process. This has been recognised from an early stage and attempts have been made to incorporate an understanding and awareness of reflexivity.

There are five identified reflexive situations.

1. The screening of the initial respondents to the questionnaires
2. The contact with the respondees
3. The interaction and interview
4. The transcribing
5. The analysis and theory generation.



In the screening questionnaire sensitive or controversial questions were avoided. It was thought that to ask 'sensitive' questions at this stage would result in the loss of potential students from the study. There was an awareness that phone contact could create problems in the homes of female students, so this was kept to a minimum, but inevitably there had to be an initial phone call followed up by letter.

The interview itself is where reflexive awareness is most apparent. The interview process is to some extent an exercise in participant observation. If the interviewer were to take a disinterested, unimaginative and 'cold' attitude during the interview then it is reasonable to assume that these interviews would have a high probability of being unsuccessful. However, as noted above, if a good working relationship can be developed early on then it is hoped that more information of a personal *and* general nature would be more forthcoming, voluntarily. In the development of a good interview the researcher has to be wary of 'engaging in futile attempts to eliminate the effects of the researcher, we should set about to understand them' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983:17).

The effects of the researcher can only be understood once they have been recognised, and two of these issues that could, indeed most probably did have an influence were those of gender and political stance. Hammersley and Atkinson argue that it may be difficult to gain access [for men] to 'the world of women' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) and this is certainly an issue where sexual boundaries are not only clear but also positively emphasised. For instance, when interviewing women one has to keep a reasonable distance, eye contact must not be excessive and broach sensitive topics with extreme care. Indeed feminists have argued that gender is an issue of which one should be constantly aware (Warren & Rassmussen, 1977).

Grounded theory allows these issues to be taken into consideration and incorporated into the generated theory by acknowledging that the data and categories are second order constructs based on the first order constructs of the interview transcripts. Grounded theory is fundamentally used for the generation of theory which is generalisable to other similar situation; or the 'the systematic discovery of the theory from the data of social research (B Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and this is precisely the way in which it is being used here.



## **Potential objections to grounded theory**

Grounded theory has been attacked from many quarters, and in this section I look at the nature of these objections since I have already made a case for the positive aspects of grounded theory in the preceding sections.

Bulmer (Bulmer, 1979), together with Rock (Rock, 1973) has a number of objections to this methodological technique. They are;

1. it is doubtful whether the researcher can genuinely suspend their awareness of relevant theories until a late stage in the research process, that is, can research be done in a theory-neutral way
2. The practical difficulties in grounded theory are considerable. For instance, in this project the interviews were taped, transcribed, analysed and constantly compared to generate categories from which theory emerged. For Bulmer, the time-frame for an operation such as this may render the time frame too difficult to achieve.
3. Then there is Bulmer's questioning of whether the theory generated by the grounded theory technique actually is a theory.
4. Rock argues that sociologists working in the field of deviance depart from the meanings that they derive from their research sources, thereby running the risk of losing touch with the research subject.

These are the main objections, how are they dealt with in this thesis?

Taking each point in turn, first, as stated above. I started out with a working hypothesis as to the range of 'types' of South Asian Muslim. While I was aware of theories of identity and ethnicity within the South Asian population, I was trying to describe, explain and theorise the issues regarding identity not of all South Asian Muslims in London or even the UK, but rather, of a small particular group within the university. Thus, the theory that emerged from constant comparison was not framed directly within prevailing theories of ethnicity and identity. What this method provided was an extremely flexible method to manage large amounts of data and to quickly see whether the initial working hypothesis worked, and if not why?



Second, is the issue of the time and the scale of the project, and yes, grounded theory is a tedious, involved and frustrating, but, the ultimate goal was to generate theory, of quality that reflected, described and analysed the situation of this group. As regards to the timescale taken by the analysis not being manageable, this was not found to be the case.

Third, is Bulmer correct to argue that the theory generated is not really theory? Not so. Grounded theory, by its very nature, gets close to the research topic, more so than other methodological techniques. It allows the inductive emergence of patterns from which broad generalisations can be made. This, I believe, is valid if the theory that emerges actually is 'true' to the research subjects' experience and conceptions. Indeed, it is the understanding it brings to the situation and thoughts of this group from being from the same ethnic background, that it allows even deeper examination and explanation of their lives. A more 'objective' approach and method of analysis would not be able to generate the quality of data and thus, the quality of findings and theory.

Finally, is Rock's objection that sociologists working in the deviancy field (and presumably, ethnicity and identity field) lose touch with the meanings of the research subjects' lives? Not, in this case, and in most other cases of grounded theory, it is *through* this method that the closeness to the subjects' meaning systems is generated and maintained. This may be Rock's experience, but it is certainly not true of all grounded theorists.

Having said this methodology only allowed the examination of issues of the students' social situations on a local or domestic level. To look at the wider political and social influences on this group it is necessary to look at the role of globalisation, and this is only achievable through examining the nature of global cultural flows. This is what grounded theory is limited to, thus, as I will show below in chapter 4 and 5.

## **THE ETHICS AND POLITICS OF RESEARCH**

Finally, there are the issues of the ethics and politics of this research, and in particular, the methodologies employed. In the first instance it is not apparent that this particular research project has any grave ethical problems. But a deeper



examination would reveal that while there is no overt deception, intrusion, falsification or misrepresentation there are subtleties in the research that point to ethical concern.

Ethics for humans 'is the science of morality: those who engage in it determine values for the regulation of human behaviour' (Homan, 1991:1). There is in this project a tension between the theoretical and ethical issues and those of a more practical nature. I will examine these two aspects together. The issues that I will look at are sponsorship, open and closed research, privacy, informed consent, ownership of data and the effects on the research subjects and researcher.

### **Sponsorship**

The research was funded through a studentship from the London Guildhall University. The initial remit was to look at the nature of South Asian religion(s) in Britain. This however is a broad area with considerable scope for interpretation and emphasis. The university, by virtue of being the funding organisation, acted as the primary gatekeeper<sup>12</sup> to the funds that were available for a three-year period, while the research supervisors acted as the secondary gatekeepers their role was to supervise and supervisors reported back to the research committee. Thus it could be argued that the London Guildhall University funded or sponsored the research and had considerable control over the direction that the research was taking.

This I believe however is not the case. The detailed conceptualisation was the researchers' (with oversight from the secondary gatekeepers). Thus in this case the university hierarchy had minimal control over the research team (researcher and research supervisors).

### **Open and closed research**

Open or closed research refers to the degree of overtness or covertness of the ongoing research. Objections to covert methods can be summarised in four stages (R. Burgess, 1984:19).

1. Researchers have responsibilities for the research subjects.

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<sup>12</sup> The London Guildhall University acted as the primary gatekeeper through the auspices of the research committee.



2. Researchers have responsibilities to colleagues so future work is not jeopardised.
3. Covert research done by graduate students will suffer stress from this type of work.
4. Covert research is bad science.

But Denzin has argued against each of the points above;

1. Where the invasion of privacy is concerned the distinction between public and private is problematic.
2. All methods could have hazardous consequences for colleagues.
3. All research is potential problematic for graduate researchers.
4. An assessment of the disruption of the social setting should be made.

In this particular research project the methodology is not covert; indeed, the aim was to be as open within as possible, within limits. There was little deception and the research participants were 'invited' or 'requested' to be interviewed. This request was followed by an explanation of what the research project was and how it was being conducted. Having said this, for Burgess 'all research to some extent is secret, as researchers do not know everything they wish to investigate at the beginning of the study' (R. Burgess, 1984:199).

This leads to the issue of informed consent. To what extent can you tell the research subject all that you can about a study? The principle of informed consent suggests that 'the human subjects of research should be allowed to agree or refuse to participate in the light of comprehensive information concerning the nature and purpose of the research' (Homan, 1991:69).

Here it was ensured that there was a high degree of informed consent, and essentially this was a two-stage process. The first step involved the explanation on the initial contact or face-to-face. They were told what the aim of the research was, who was being studied, what the process of data collection is and informing them of issues of confidentiality.



But it has to be asked that to what degree was informed consent to the maximum possible? For full informed consent they would have to know, in detail, the research project as it was at *that* stage and exactly what the researcher wanted to find out. If this was all told then it is debatable if they would be able to fully comprehend the details and make an informed choice on the basis of all the data. This could also alter their responses to the question, with them being to a degree more reflexively aware of their participation; in short, it would pollute the research atmosphere.

Therefore, as with many other issues a compromise is reached where the students are informed enough for them to make an educated and rational decision, thus ensuring a high degree of informed consent. The information that is given by the interviewee is given freely without coercion and with informed consent. There is no payment<sup>13</sup> for their participation in the research, the data was secure in the sense of ensuring their confidentiality and anonymity and they went away with knowledge that they had somehow contributed something.

## CONCLUSION

As I have shown, the methodology forms an integral part of the thesis. It is the methods chosen and the application of the various methodologies that give credence to the theory, and this is more so with the methodological technique of grounded theory.

The methodological procedure is problematic in that there are epistemological issues that are to be considered and that the research cannot be value free. However, an awareness of the reflexivity of social research, and in particular, ethnographic research mitigates the problems that could be and are encountered during the research itself.

The ethics and politics of social research also have to be of central concern. It is possible to be blasé about ethics in the pursuing of knowledge, but to take such a stance would be to defeat the essentially political objectives of openness and equality.

What I have outlined above is first, the construction of categories as an explanatory tool to describe the lives of these young people in terms of their personal

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<sup>13</sup> Although it must be noted that the researcher paid the travel expenses of 2 interviewees (£2.70).



and domestic situations. Then I have suggested that to look beyond the local I will have to employ the theory of globalisation as provided by Giddens. This is the aim of the next two chapters (4 and 5). I will present the data generated using grounded theory and I will provide a contextualisation and commentary to show what the key themes are in terms of what is important in the lives of this group. In chapter 5 I will employ globalisation theory to show how cultural and political flows inform the makeup of their identities and what the consequence is of this in their lives in Britain.



## **CHAPTER 4 - CONTEXTUALISING THE INTERVIEW FINDINGS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I will present the data in analytical themes, adding substantial discussion and commentary around the data and placing this in relation to the contextual factors to show the negotiations at work in identity formation. It examines the key aspects of the social, domestic, and personal environment of the students that were interviewed. The contexts play an important part in the development of the interviewees' religious and ethnic identity. Within this context the focus is on three main areas, first the family, second their relationship to South Asia culture, for example marriage and relationships and finally, to what extent they practice and participate in the Muslim religion.

The key aim of this chapter is to present interview data. This data provides an overview and flavour of the range of opinions, experiences and actions of this particular group. This chapter will also put into context the domestic and private situations of the interviewees within a context of the experience of South Asian Muslims in Britain. So, the interview data will be discussed within contextual factors and in the light of debates about the experiences of South Asian Muslims in Britain.

### **SOUTH ASIAN MUSLIM FAMILIES**

#### **The role of parents and the extended family network**

The heterosexual patriarchal nuclear or extended family is the norm for South Asian Muslims in the UK (Anwar, 1985; Butler, 1994) and this is reflected in the interviewees. All the interviewees came from a nuclear or extended family structure with the father (or other senior male) the 'head' of the household. The family in this culture is that of a close family structure (Butler, 1994; Khan, 1977; Shaw, 1994).

The family is a central organising structure for this group and the heads of the families are keen to maintain and/or enhance the distinctive nature of a minority



community (Jacobson, 1998). The data shows that the families play a central and important role in the life of the students'. For instance;

*AA One thing about my family is that we have our limits, not so much that 'you can't go out', my parents have been quite liberal minded, but going out with guys, no, and we have gone along with that.*

The South Asian family operates in a way that circumscribes the lives of the students, placing restrictions or boundaries over what is acceptable for them to do and how to behave. So,

*JI In many Koranic ayats it says that you should have a good relationship with your parents and you shouldn't leave them, even if they are non-believers you shouldn't leave them because it is your duty to help them out as well. My religion has given me a wonderful way of helping parents, looking after them, they take their view and they take your view.*

Here what is seen that this student is setting his parents up as a central focus of his life and he is accepting of this position. What this indicates is that according to Islam, parents have a central role in the whole life of their children and that the children have to hold their parents in highest regard in terms of respect and action. For instance, to swear, drink (alcohol) or do anything that is contrary to both culture and religion, in front of parents is not acceptable both from the point of view of the parents, but also from the point of view of the students themselves. So, for instance, watching television, in Britain is problematic and difficult, for example;

*MA The type of respect, traditional respect between father and son and the types of attitudes. For example the TV, normally we don't watch this stuff at home, while if we are back home we watch the TV there is no problem, we had not seen this stuff what we see here, all this garbage and things.*

What he means here is that sex, violence, swearing, even of the mildest variety is a source of discomfort for him, while watching ordinary 'pre-watershed' programs with his parents. But television is not the only problematic area;



**AA** *One thing about my family is that we have our limits, not so much that 'you can't go out', my parents have been quite liberal minded, but going out with girls, no, and we have gone along with that.*

For this group, simple social acts such as 'going out' with the other sex is very problematic, and something that the students tend not to do with the knowledge of your parents. The interviews with the students on the whole, show a majority of them who while accepting the role that their parents have in drawing up and imposing these rules that they have to live within. However, there is a range between complete acceptance of this, to, a position to where the student does things without their parents' knowledge and 'behind their back'. Areas such as 'the appropriate criteria for marriage partners...dating, going out at night... [and] dress are all areas where the students accept, respect but also resent the control of their parents (Jacobson, 1998:91)

**SB** *I have to tell [friends] that I can't go out raving all night to clubs, it is more traditional than religion, but it does affect my life.... Because I am a Muslim there are so many restrictions and I have got to bow to them all. If I stay at home then I am not going to get into much mischief am I? There are times when I would like to go out, not doing anything ridiculous.*

The immediate family is not the only constraining influence on the lives of the students. Kith and kin and community are also important. So for instance, there is the constant 'fear' that someone from their community will see them smoking or out with a person of the opposite sex.

**SB** *He [father] says 'why do you do it it's disgusting you've started and you won't be able to stop.' He did say that my reputation is important, what he was trying to say was that if someone saw me trying to do something wrong, they will tell everyone else, and then you are marked, like Syeda's daughter and its because we're all girls its easier to be marked....It makes me angry actually, but then I don't have no respect for my cousins ...You meet up once a year and you feel really awkward because you are from this family. Nobody talks to you because you're so and sos daughter, who didn't marry so and so many years ago and she's still unmarried. It's just ridiculous, it's really horrible.*



The experiences of the above students are common among the students interviewed. While the parents are not, on the whole, excessively strict in their approach to their children, there is a prevailing sense of what is correct behaviour and way of conducting oneself both in private and in public. The degree of control and influence is variable, but the prevailing underlying knowledge of the students is that they know that they cannot do certain things such as going out and dating without their parents' knowledge like white British students could do. Often, it is the case that the parents themselves would trust their children but were concerned that someone else would see them talking to 'a guy or a girl' and that this would give the family a bad reputation within the community. Central here is the concept of *izzat* or honour. The maintenance or at least the semblance of honour is a controlling factor in the behaviour of families and individuals.

Part of this maintenance of *izzat* is through the students themselves displaying the correct markers such as traditional dress (at least within the home and within the community) and attitude within their practice and conducting themselves in the appropriate manner. Also, a test of this is in within the issue of marriage and partners. This is what will be examined next.

### **Marriage and relationships**

One of the key areas where the restrictions of both family and community can be seen in action is in the area of relationships and the choice of marriage partners. There are a number of key issues at play here, first is the expectations of parents, that of community and the young people themselves. Marriage, in traditional South Asian Muslim families, is often conducted within the extended family, so, in other words, endogamy is normal or usual. This is especially the case with their parents. Indeed, marriage and relationships was brought up by nearly all of the interviewees independent of the researcher, and this was then pursued. There is now a developing sense that the ways that parents want the marriage of their children conducted is changing as a result of living in Britain where the students are subject to broader ideas about how they would like to conduct their lives.

*JI        Now there are a lot of changes [as a result of living in Britain], before parents used to choose, choose in the sense that the guy wants to get married, he does*



*not have to see his wife, his father just gives his word and they used to do that. Here in this country it is changing, and they are also changing their mentality. Most of the cases I see sometime I write this paperwork in the Mosque, and I write out the marriage certificates so I see many marriages broken.*

Or in this young mans case there is a degree of inevitability about the whole process;

**RK** *Well I suppose after a certain time in your life you want to get married, you need company don't you? I suppose that is how our culture is, you study, and then you get married, and then you have kids, and then you get them married.*

There is however in some cases a complete acceptance of the way marriage and relationships should be conducted according to Islam, even if this means challenging the parents' traditional views. For instance, under Islamic law (Sharia), marriage has to be freely entered into by both parties. The man and woman have to make a choice and have the final say in whether to marry or not. However, this is not always recognised by parents, so the students have a willingness to fight for what they see as their rights under Islamic law.

**SA** *As I said, free mixing is haram. It is prohibited. The only relationship for a man and a woman is through marriage. Yes that's right. I mean if you look at it culturally, Islamically there is a different way, example, if someone wishes to propose to somebody else, they are allowed to propose to them, find out about them from somebody who is close to them, what they are like. This person is obliged to tell the truth. If the person that they are enquiring about is bad tempered they have to say so. That's the way to go about it. Now if the person is a man or a woman then they can propose directly if they wish to do so, Islamically, and or they can go through their parents. Islamically it doesn't matter of the person is black, white, or whatever, as long as they are Muslim. Culturally if I was to marry a Black Muslim it would matter to my parents. I tend to put anything that doesn't agree with Islam in one box, that is Kuffr. Whether it is Asian or Western or whatever it is all the same. They do not come from the creator; they come from the minds of man. They are all the same to me. Like for Hindus where the girl and*



*boy do not meet until they are married, that is not allowed in Islam. Marriage is a contract, you are obliged to know who you are forming the contract with... or, for this young man*

**AA** *I have learned to accept that marriage is better than having a girlfriend, to respect women in general. You cannot go around and behave like a silly fool as I see it but today with this girl and tomorrow with that girl, this is not the Islamic code of life. Islam says get married and respect that woman and share the rest of your life with that woman whether you become rich or poor. But before you get married think carefully and make a decision, not parents make a decision. Islam says that you are going to be married. Two people are going to spend the rest of their lives, you people decide, but not through boyfriend and girlfriend. You talk, and if this suits you, you get married. This brings two families closer together. In Western world you always have this problem that mother in laws seem to be a problem on the way. In that way you do not have this problem. It brings the whole family, whole community together. Praying has made my life different, and I am trying hard to pray regularly...*

This issue of conflict can be seen on both sides of the equation. For instance, parents of a student may wish them to have an arranged marriage and the students may object either because they think it is contrary to the rules of Islam or, as below the parents have given some flexibility to the student in that they have a say in who they marry, or at least 'view'.

**SB** *My parents said to me that if you like someone you are welcome to bring him over or if they find someone. I have rishte come round, like family friends, and mum and dad will be like 'what do you think?' but they will never say we like someone we don't care if you don't, you'll marry him. The whole idea is rather scary. You have to sell yourself in a way. My mum really dislikes it.*

However, some families, even before the stage of marriage, object to their daughters (and it is mainly daughters) from mixing with men, even if it is within the university.

**NH** *It can be a problem with mum. Dad's fine, he realises colleges are mixed and you have to work, but mum says 'well can't you work with a female'? If*



*you are put in a group you can't say that I can't work with you boys because my mum will kill me. In this country you will work with the opposite sex, it shouldn't be a problem.*

But at the other end of the scale is the view that it is their lives and happiness that is important, whatever the parents may think;

*AM Not necessarily if we love each other we have the right to marry each other. When you are grown up you have the right to make your own decision. If the families are unhappy it doesn't matter as long as I'm happy.*

This is the instrumentalist view that seeks to give primacy to his happiness and wishes, countering the rules of Islam (in keeping parents happy) and tradition (being subject to arranged marriages). Overall, what the data has indicated is that marriage is a point of conflict for the young people and their families. This is similarly found in other studies, (Ballard & Ballard, 1977; Butler, 1994; Jacobson, 1998; Khan, 1977; Lewis, 1994) and is not confined to Muslims, but is common in other South Asian communities as well. However, specifically, in the Muslims students traditions are found to be maintained.

It has been observed that the conflict is born of a fear of 'free mixing of the sexes [which] offends the code of decency, a fact which severely restricts women's lives outside the home' (Rhodes & Nabi, 1992:335), but having said this, the young people still manage to see partners of the opposite sex, surreptitiously. The range of conflict is from those that want what is popularly termed a 'love marriage' (in South Asian cultures) to that of a strictly Islamic method of marriage where the partner should be a good Muslim (read practising), to those who fall somewhere in the middle, in that their parents have come to acknowledge that there has to be some element of choice for the young person and that they have to be lenient, within the bounds of culture and tradition.

The idea of marrying out of their religion however is something that is universally frowned upon by the young people let alone what their parents may think. Indeed, marrying a non-Muslim is restricted by gender in Islam, for men can marry a Jew or a Christian, but women have to marry a Muslim. The main reason is given by this person (erroneously, as Muslim men can only marry 'people of the



book', i.e. Jews and Christians). It does however show not only the gendered nature of the religious belief (Butler, 2001; P. Desai, 2000) but also of its adherents, (Mernissi, 1985) and this is certainly apparent here.

*AM Muslim men can marry anyone, Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian. But a woman can't. That's because if a Muslim man marries a non-Muslim there children will be Muslim, because their father is Muslim. A Muslim woman cannot marry someone who is not Muslim. If they have children then they will not follow her religion. I couldn't marry someone who is not Muslim.*

The sources of traditional ideas are bound up with notions of a homeland or belonging to a particular place. Within this context, the traditions of 'back home' are a feature of how South Asians view their lives in the UK (Anwar, 1979) (Khan, 1977) and their feelings towards their perceived homeland. This is just not the case for the parents or 'first generation' but also for the second as well.

There is uncertainty for the students in the sense that 'belonging' to Britain is as problematic as belonging to their place of origin in South Asia. For instance;

*LB Although it [Bangladesh] is my homeland I feel that I am part of this country. I am confused about this. Although it is my homeland I feel more at ease and comfortable to things here because I can relate to things here than there. When I go there I am a real foreigner, everyone laughs at my accent and, but I really enjoyed it. Because I was born there I would like to check it out, feel that I am a part of it and that I want to live there and find out how it would be to be a part of it. Now that I am here I have experienced two different countries, I want to be there but I will actually end up being here because I have grown up here and I feel part of this country more than Bangladesh although there are all these resentments here and that kind of thing.*

Here, this woman student there is some sense of loss at deciding that her place in this country rather than Bangladesh. This is not unique, a few of the interviewees recognise that life for them in South Asia would be more difficult than it is here. The main reason for this is that they are more socialised and have come to accept the ways, norms and values of South Asian Muslims in the UK.



and feel somehow to be in an alien environment in South Asia. As the same young woman goes on to say;

**LB** *My parents kept saying that 'oh Bangladeshi girls are like this and that so brilliant' and I thought oh gosh, girls over there were doing things that I was doing over there, I know why my parents did that because they wanted to hold on so much to their identity and culture and they elaborated this beautiful thing, where everyone is so religious and everything is nice. But, when I went there it wasn't like that.*

However, there is quite a significant body of opinion that believes that there is a 'purer way of life' as one young man put it in South Asia. But that he is aware that it is a very restricted society.

**JJ** *Of course I find it difficult because of the environment that I live in, but what cracks my mind is that if I was living in Bangladesh then I would have been able to pray five times a day, that wouldn't be a problem. But I wouldn't have been able to raise my voice in favour of Islam, It is really painful because living in a Kaffir country like Britain if you have a beard if you talk about politics nobody would attack you, but there, your own people attack you.*

**AA** *Over 1975 and 1995 I went back to Bangladesh 6 times, I went to school 4 times, they were sort of a year, 8, 9 months period. I often kept in touch with the people, and I was brought up in this community in this country and obviously in Bangladesh. I had begun to understand people and I have picked up some good things from my community, and there are bad things, socially, politically, but the root of the problem is a lack of education and people have been pushed around here and there and they have been misguided.*

There is however an acceptance that all is not rosy back home. Indeed, when visiting India, Pakistan or Bangladesh some of the young people find that they can take advantage of having relatively higher material wealth and also having the higher or more esteemed status of being British.

**RK** *I am quite used to it because I have been quite a few times. We have a good time whenever we go. The thing is that in Karachi if you have contacts you*



*are all right, where we stay there are drivers, chauffeurs, cooks and all that, it is quite a good holiday. We have so many relatives there; we try to meet everyone there, even in the poorer areas. We live in like Defence. So we have a good time. The lifestyle in terms of living there's a lot of corruption and backhanders. I doubt whether I would want to live there. I mean it is good for a holiday and stuff, but I don't think it is too good to live there.*

So, it is good for a holiday, but not too live. This is in marked contrast to the way parents see the issue of being 'back home', and for them there is as Anwar (Anwar, 1979) calls it, a myth of return, the idea that one day when social and economic conditions are conducive, they will return.

In the areas of marriage and partners, the parental rules imposed in these areas are indicative of a relationship with a culture that is not only present within the South Asian community within London, but also is evident for the students perceptions of back home. For them, and their parents there is a view that life and therefore the problematic of living in Britain would somehow be alleviated if they were in South Asia, and there is a degree of attachment to the homeland. This has been discussed in various places where a village or urban culture of South Asia is reproduced in a locality such as London (Jacobson, 1998; Rhodes & Nabi, 1992). What is particularly relevant here is how back home is idealised as a place of happiness, simplicity and a better life. The basis for this is that Pakistan and Bangladesh as Muslim countries and that India have a sizeable Muslim minority, and in all these countries, the students see the source of an idealised life which is based upon Islam.

This belief in Islam as the source of good (even if they are in conflict with it or have a problematic and difficult relationship with it) is looked at in the next section where I will be examining the data gathered on the specific question of religion.

## **ISLAM AS OBSERVANCE IN THE PRIVATE SPHERE**

It has been observed that there is a high degree of religiosity amongst South Asian Muslim in the UK and that the degree of observance is high (Anwar, 1998; Jacobson, 1998; Werbner, 1988). However, having said this, the observance of religion amongst young South Asian Muslims is problematic, especially in the areas of dress codes, diet, education and mixing with members of the opposite sex. For



women this is more problematic than it is for men (Anwar, 1982, 1998; Butler, 2001; Jeffery, 1976; Mernissi, 1985; Rhodes & Nabi, 1992). Religion is one of the key components of the ethnic identity of this group (Jacobson, 1997) and is also a method of maintaining and establishing social networks over and beyond their kith and kin networks.

The observance of Islam is transmitted through the process of socialisation, where the role of not only the parents but also of the wider community and its structures play an important part in the imparting of religious knowledge and understanding amongst the second generation. Indeed, as Anwar says, Islam is a 'binding force', which keeps Pakistani (and presumably other South Asian Muslims) together and also serves to mark them out as different from other groups (Anwar, 1985). Similarly, Gardner and Shukur (Gardner & Shukur, 1994) in their study of British Bengalis shows the growing significance of Islam amongst this group and of how problematic it is for them in the sense that Islam is seen as an alien culture in the UK and thus as Muslims they can never be accepted as British, while on the other hand, Islam and their Bengali background is a central part of their identity.

However, there is an important feature in the renewed commitment to Islam among the young South Asian Muslims. As I will show below, one of the important features of the renewed interest in Islam for some of the interviewees is that the type of religious practice and doctrine that they are now subscribing to is distinct from the old traditional view of Islam of their parents. This, it is argued, is a function of being of a second generation a society where their religion is much maligned and misunderstood (Butler, 2001), that they are concentrated in the lower strata of society, and that there is a distinct form of racism towards them, i.e. Islamophobia (Modood, 1992; RunnymedeTrust, 1997).

In this section I will be looking at the role of Islam (in particular, the importance of prayer, religious proscriptions), in the lives of the interviewee, how it affects their behaviour and actions, and how they see Islam as not simply a religion but of a way of life. In addition to this I will also look at the range of ideas and conceptualisations of religion that have been expressed and how this fits with the orientating 'ideal types' that I started out with, i.e. value rationality and instrumental



rationality. In particular is will be looking at prayer, religious rules, the student's belief in Islam and their practice.

## **Prayer**

In Islam, Prayer (salat in Arabic) is a compulsory five times daily practice for Muslims. Under ideal conditions salat should be offered with at least one other person (communally, called a jamaat), but not necessarily in a mosque. There are five times of prayer (pre-daybreak-Fajr, midday- Zuhr, mid-afternoon-Asar, post-sunset-Maghrib and evening-Eisha). On Friday the holy day, it is a requirement that prayers are said in jamaat and preferably in a mosque. However, before salat can be offered the person must be ritually clean and are required to undergo a ritual and prescribed ablution. The salat is offered facing towards the Kaaba in Mecca and entails a prescribed set of recitations (in Arabic) and postures.

Overall, it was widely recognised amongst the interviewees that the five-times-a-day prayer is a central requirement of Islam, however, the only a fifth (eight interviewees) said that they pray five-times-a-day, every day. In general, the interviewees can be categorised into three groups, the first who regularly pray, those who sometimes pray and those that pray very rarely, if at all. What is important here is not so much the frequency of praying but rather their feelings towards prayer and what they see as the function and effect of the prayers that they do or do not perform.

This person for instance;

**RK** *My brothers-in-laws are very religious because they pray five times a day. I wouldn't call myself all that religious; I mean I try to pray at least once a day. I read the Koran when I can, I also have read the translation. I don't eat pork or ham or whatever...Sometimes I would say Friday prayer, Eid prayers I never missed, and this sort of stuff. In my heart I always had the respect for the Islamic religion, that respect was within the Mosque basically and within the Koran, without trying to understand it. Then when I came into this country in 1990 and then I'd seen the Gulf War and I learnt English, I had to be educated properly. I did my B.Sc. and all this stuff. Like at Commercial Road I come in at lunchtime sometimes and they are going in or coming out of prayers and I feel guilty that I*



*should be in there, I should be praying, but I just walk on by to college. When I'm in college I can hear them praying, you can hear them on the loudspeaker in the lectures, and it happens to me more or less every day. It hammers the point home even more when it comes in, it makes me feel even more guilty. Sometimes it makes me want to get up and walk out of the lecture and go to the Mosque but I haven't done that. But I don't even know namaaz the only time that I do go to the mosque is on Eid at Regents Park.*

This young man recognises that he is not praying as regularly as he should and the overwhelming feeling is that of guilt and regret that he does not fulfil this religious requirement. This is echoed by NA who states that;

*NA Yes I would like to be able to namaaz. My dad is quite religious and he to reads the Koran every year. He keeps telling me that I should be learning it but I haven't got round to it, with other things on my mind.*

Here NA also reflects that other members of his family are practising Muslims and that while he does pray occasionally, the main reason he does not pray is that he is waylaid by external factors that do not leave him time to pray.

Compare the above to AA;

*AA I didn't pray yesterday, and I felt so guilty about this, I missed Zuhr, Asar, and Maghrib. Today I prayed my Jumma [Friday communal prayers] with the congregation at Whitechapel Mosque and I just feel so comfortable here I do not have any worries. The difference between prayers a few years ago and now is that I pray to God alone. I have this picture in my mind that I am praying for the creator, not praying as a punishment or anything. It is good for my mind, good for my body, and it keeps me straight and by praying I am demanding something from God. [Prayer] It keeps me to the straight path, like it doesn't distract you to going to do evil and that there is a creator watching you. You belong to that creator, and you belong to that creator. If you are going to do someone harm you think that the creator is watching you and I shouldn't be doing this. I am not afraid of any man I am afraid of God.*



However, for some, choosing to pray is dependant upon the time and their own inclination to do so;

**SB** *It depends, sometimes I'll get into the mood and I'll try to pray as much as I can. My sister, the one whose married, she prays as much as she can, if she's praying then I might join her. Because I don't know the full namaaz that hinders me. It's the one right at the end where you sit down; I can never remember the full verse, really, I've forgotten as well. I only know so much. I knew it when I was younger, but since I've up I haven't given it as much time. So that hinders me. And then my sisters reading it I say can I join in and she says yes, that fine. [When I do pray] I just feel good; I just feel that I am a good girl in God's eyes. But then I've only done one, and when I sit down and think about it I think that 'I've only done one, what about all the others that I have missed. And even though I pray I still smoke. ...I spent a lot of time with at her university because they have a prayer room and with her friends, I became more religiously aware. When I came back to Central House it went completely out of the window.*

For the above prayer is somehow there to assuage guilt and is quite an instrumental act in order to feel 'I just feel good; I just feel that I am a good girl in God's eyes'. Similarly, SB's sister prayed in order to ask God for her husband to overcome the UK visa requirements and come over here to join her.

However, prayer is a central part of some interviewees' lives, it is not a matter of choice but rather a fundamental requirement. Thus, one of the campaigns of the Islamic Society within the university was to get a dedicated prayer room (with clean toilets and washing facilities close by). Take SA;

**SA** *It was [praying] a problem until we got the prayer room, when that went we had to find an empty room. It's not that much of a problem if you are so intent on doing it, you can do it. But living in a white Western country I find it a problem because everyday I experience some kind in some peoples eyes harassment or abuse. The other day I was walking down the road and this man came up to me and pointed two fingers in my face. That kind of thing. I've had worse. I've worked as well, for the health service, there was somebody who was*



*racist there he was intent on being nasty, going out of his way to make life miserable for me.*

So, the thought here *'It's not that much of a problem if you are so intent on doing it, you can do it'* is a key feature of those interviewees who pray regularly. For them, if they want to then they can organise their lives around prayer times. The campaign around the prayer room was a rallying point for the students. They saw it as a *jihad* (struggle) and their winning their campaign was a boost for the Islamic society.

JAI *I didn't feel separate, they made us separate. ...In college we needed a prayer room and we had to fight for it for a long time. Eventually they agreed so they gave us a room on the fourth floor, something is better than nothing.*

Overall, the choice to pray or not is not simply a matter of choice. For the more instrumental students' prayer, or the opportunity to pray is something that is dependant upon the inclination and opportunity to pray, while for the more religiously value rational students, prayer is a requirement of Islam and it has to be done, whatever the circumstances.

Linked to the issue of prayer is that of the rules of Islam. Islam prescribes activities (such as daily prayer) and proscribes things such as particular foods, sex outside marriage and alcohol for instance. In the next section I will be looking at how this affects the lives of the students and see what choices they make and why.

### **Religious rules**

In Islam, anything that is termed *haram* refers to that which is forbidden for Muslims and *halal* to that which is allowed. For Muslims all actions fall either in one of these labels or in between, i.e. those that are allowed (halal) and those that are forbidden (haram). Second generation South Asian Muslims face a number of contradictions in their lives, for example, between what they wish to do and what they are allowed. For these young people in general, the Koran and Hadith is a set of guiding principles that they know that they, as believing Muslims should comply with. They should take the rules and guidance of Islam as the source of



action-orientated decisions, for example, whether or not to drink alcohol. Take for instance NA;

**NA** *I've tried it [alcohol], I don't know why I tried it but I stopped, so my religion won. Curiosity, all my friends said that I'd get used to the taste, but I said that I just didn't want to, I'd rather not. They say that you get used to the taste but... I don't eat hamburgers, but I eat [haram] chicken sometimes, I don't eat much red meat anyway. No, my friends in the flat sometimes fry bacon... They poke it in my face just for a joke, but I can handle that. I would feel offended, I wouldn't do anything about it. I would tell them how I feel; I would put them in their place. They keep saying that you don't know what you're missing when you don't eat pork; well I say that I can live with that.*

NA is typical of the dilemma faced by the young people, they know what is *right and wrong* but make a decision or a choice as to what they wish to do or refuse. A further illustration of the same dilemma is provided by RK.

**RK** *No I've never drunk and I don't think I would. I suppose I would later on study the religion more, I think Islam is really powerful and I think that it is the right religion, and I think that when I've studied it fully. I would like to know it fully rather than what your parents tell you, that you should do this and that.*

This notion of Islam being powerful (RK) or my religion winning (RA) represents a central dilemma for them. Do they try something such as alcohol, McDonalds, if they do, how will they feel about it, or what would their Muslim peers say? Peer pressure however is not a factor for those who are more confident about their religiosity;

**NR** *It's a basic thing. When we are eating we don't eat pork and we don't drink wine, but then we also don't take any meat because we know that it's unlikely to be halal or kosher.*

It is quite straightforward here there is a binary choice, halal or haram, Islam or Kuffr, good or bad, Western or eastern. Sex for instance;



**JJ** ... like fornication, I do not do adultery, in terms of getting married, and if I wanted to have a sexual relation then I would get married. I do not go around doing certain things that Islam would not allow me to, that is why in Western society they are in a mess, because they do not have a good relationship with their wives, more often there are marriage problems. You will see now also in Bangladeshi and Pakistani and Indian Muslims they are trapped, the divorce rate is going up and they don't understand what the importance of getting married. They don't understand what sort of relationship there should be between husband and wife, they don't know her rights on you, all sorts of things, these are the reasons why you often see marriages are broken.

Clearly, the dichotomy is in some cases seen as an easy choice to make. Those that don't make the right choice are somehow seen to be losing or have lost their religion and therefore their identity. They have become a 'coconut', i.e. brown on the outside, white on the inside. Their core is no longer Muslim, Asian, or eastern, their identity is seen by their peers as something that is now alien. This is a strong view that belies the complexity of the dilemma for the young people. NA for example says that she would *probably* wait to have sex, and draws a direct contrast between herself and her cousin.

NA I would probably wait till I'm married. It is part of being a Muslim; you wait until you're married. My cousin, he's the opposite of me, I get on best with my cousin, he has a girlfriend, he drinks, he smokes! I have at home books on Islam and religion and I intend to read them when I have more time.

The dilemma is more clearly illustrated by SB;

**SB** For instance going out to eat, it has to be halal. Going out with friends, the majority of my friends at Central House are white and at times it's 'lets go down to the bar', then I will say that I don't drink, they will say 'but no one is looking, we won't tell anyone'. Stuff like that, I have to tell them that I can't go out raving all night to clubs, it's mainly more traditional than religious. But it does affect my life.

There is a tension here between going to the bar and not drinking. The fact that she goes to the bar would be unthinkable for some of the interviewees but this



is one of her strategies of coping, or, accommodating her feelings of ontological security to the situation she finds herself in. This is a theme to which I will return later.

But what is the source of the influences on the lives of these young people? An obvious source of religious feeling is through the process of socialisation from their family (Anwar, 1985) but also is the effect of wider international occurrences such as the gulf war or the Rushdie Affair (Werbner, 1994). However, again, these themes will be examined below. What is of interest here is the more mundane or personal source of religious influence of the lives of the students.

There are three main sources identified from the research data. First is the family, second are their Muslim peers and third is Muslim organisations such as mosques and Islamic societies (as in the university). It is not possible to say which is the most fundamental, except to say that the data indicates that the family is the initial source of not only religious and cultural knowledge, but is the basis for linking these ideas to a homeland. The idea of 'back-home' and the myth of Pakistan, India or Bangladesh are presented as an idealised land of goodness as discussed by their parents and family is inextricably linked to religion, or rather, the traditions of religion that are peculiar to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The family as a source of influence of traditional (though not always strictly accurate Islamic teaching) is important as JI states that what he was taught was not really Islam as he has now learnt it:

*JI In terms of religion when I was young my grandfather every Friday would come from Jumma and preach to us, whatever he used to learn he would come and tell us, he'd tell us that we should not go out with people and that we should not lie and that we should respect our elders and that we should pray, if we do not pray we will burn in hellfire and etc. So every Friday afternoon we would really really shit ourselves and on Saturday morning we used to pray.*

*I do pray, I was the goody goody if you like. I think about it my grandfather is very traditional minded, what he preached us half of it is wrong really. Since I have come to university my knowledge of Islam has widened a great deal and I have come to realise that half of what my grandfather used to preach to us was*



*half tradition and half patriarchy, it is like male dominated things, you know things like that you must obey your husband must never ask him to do things for you as a wife, he can only voluntarily do it; hey that is all crap, I have debates with my brother in law, he is all Islam and then he is contradicting himself by defrauding the government, lying about things, for example like, I am sure you must know a lot of Asian families they work but they are on the dole, now that is wrong, it is cheating the system and Islamically it is wrong, it is a contradiction that a lot of Asian people do have. People like us who do have a knowledge of Islam but who lack it as well will think hey there they are preaching Islam and they are doing bad, so what do they believe.*

*Another debate was about contraception, this side of Islam says that you can't it's haram, then the other says that if you are ill then you can take it. People who already have a limited knowledge of Islam then you tend to step back and say hey what is going on. When I came to this country I wasn't really interested, I was ten or eleven years old, and at that time I came the situation here is totally different and I did not know many people apart from my relatives. Then I met other people and they made me understand. I used to pray only on Friday and I was a part time Muslim. As soon as I started reading books I got more into it, the more you read the more you get knowledge from it. So I started joining one of these one of these Islamic movements and then I became aware of reading the Koran and reading translations, it is no good reading like a parrot. I don't know if you know that. This is for human beings and mankind to understand, not to read like a parrot. So I started to read, and the more I read the more I got into understanding what Allah wants from us. There is one ayat [he says the verse in Arabic] and this means that Allah has created man and jinn for no other reason but to worship me. So I started realising the importance and I would give other people to know about Islam also and make them understand that they must understand what they do because everything has a limit. You know that you are going to die, no way you can escape from death, and eventually death will visit you. So I get on with those people and try to make them understand whatever I can.*

*Religion cannot force anybody. You can tell them but it is up to them to you know. So then on I joined them and I started to pray, the more I prayed the more I*



*liked and I eventually visited three times the Kaaba, I have done my hajj and two umrahs . It is really nice, you see different people, and you do not have racism there...*

This pointing the university and the peers within the university overlaps with the more formal Islamic organisations such as the university's Islamic society and with the influence of family as is seen below;

**NR** *My brother who was the first to start university here he had some friends and started getting into Islam. He would come home and talk about it to me. I was quite interested, my sister wasn't. He would tell us about how women should cover themselves, but that's not the only topic, he told us many more things. From then on I went to Islamic talks and circles me and him together to local Mosques or anywhere else where there was a talk on and it started from there basically. You know, when I first started wearing head scarves I just liked the concept, it was something which I thought was pious and good I didn't know anything about Islam as I said I have not been brought up that way and my parents reacted, they thought that I was going through a phase for a while. So they weren't to happy to be honest [with you wearing a hijab] they thought it was a phase because we free mixed with other people and used to go to dinner parties and stuff like that, so where in the past I would wear certain clothes and dress in a certain way I wouldn't any more [for e.g. what jeans and dresses, skirts] yeah and see through clothes even so I thought that I wouldn't do that anymore. There was a bit of a conflict between my parents and me, they thought that I was being disobedient. The arguments were the other way around. Personally I have talked to them about Islam, because I am personally convinced of Islam intellectually.*

However, for LB it is the family that is central;

**LB** *I think that, I do not know much about religion, I haven't lived around where everyone is religious, I live in a council flat in Old Street and there are not many Asians or Muslims around so we did not have that kind of...force. My mum and dad are really religious*

However, formal religious education within the mosque was also seen as important;



**A4** *I just used to go and pray at the mosque. I didn't think why or what I am saying, I just used to recite in Arabic until I met an Imam at East London Mosque. The Koran, the final message for mankind and you either believe in it fully or you don't. If you do there is evidence that you will find peace in your life. I still find it hard to be a complete Muslim and follow a complete code of life though I have practised it after understanding certain things it has brought peace to my life. Now I understand what I am praying, to whom I am praying and what is the purpose of praying and what is the code of life. I am now opening books and reading. Before I was programmed to be a Muslim, just because I was born in a Muslim family. Now I am looking at religion and questioning it, also I have opened my eyes and compared with other religions, Christianity, Hindu, Buddhism, compare and I find Islam is my way of life, and it is a universal message for everybody.*

The third factor identified from the data however is external events. The Gulf War and the Rushdie Affair were two burning issues for the young people. This however, will be discussed in the next chapter where I will be placing it within the context of the processes of globalisation. But here, the choices are clear for the students:

**NR** *It depends on how much I am willing to do for my religion I think it is difficult. The talks I go to, like I don't go to Speaker's Corner or wear my hijab, until something really arises that hits you in the face basically that makes you think that here is Britain and here is Islam, which one are you going to choose.*

The literature that has been examined in chapter two points to many other instances where Islam has become vilified but it was these issues that were brought up by the interviewees. For instance, SB presented a rather mixed view when she was talking about the role influences on her personal feelings of religiosity:

**SB** *I always remember that my parents were at first with Saddam Hussein, but obviously we can only go by what's on the news, and that may not be objective. Are we getting news from every single corner, or just from the British and American journalists, and then they realised he was killing his own people and abusing his power. My father has a little more to go on because he reads the*



*Daily Jung so he would tell us this is another point of view don't just go by the news. Over Rushdie they wouldn't rant and rave about it, and we assumed that he had done something wrong, but then people asked us, 'have you read the book?' ... I'd say 'a million and one Muslims can't be wrong' But I would allow the fact that it could have been misinterpreted... I think what he did was a mistake and he could have said sorry, he didn't have to bring out a paperback. He kept it going on. He had no respect for this religion, he had no knowledge, he had no right and he should have pulled the book out. I don't think that the fatwa was right because Khomeini right because being only a human, did he have the right to judge? I feel that he will get his comeuppance from God. I don't think the Imam had any right to judge him, and say he must die. He did wrong, but can we take his life. Many people don't question that I have read in the Koran that a life is only taken if someone else's life is taken. But he repented he must be forgiven. Salman Rushdie did not take anyone's life he showed great disrespect towards the religion. May be there could have been some other way. I feel he's got away with it. It gives way for others to disrespect the religion. Nobody has the right to disrespect anybody else's religion but then you have this right of opinion that gets in the way. It's difficult to judge.*

This deep feeling of hurt is only compounded by the representations in the media and in the popular consciousness of Islam, the effects of which are keenly felt by the students. The feeling that they personally are being attacked by the portrayal of Muslims as illiberal and fundamentalists (Weldon, 1989) or as a group that 'are at least as dangerous as communism once was...at the conclusion of this age it is a serious threat, because it represents terrorism, religious fanaticism and exploitation of social and economic justice' (Claes, 1995) in the global sense to a local level where they are portrayed in the popular and press by the headline in The People newspaper which proclaims 'slaughtering goats, burning books, mutilating teenagers...and they still want me to respect the Muslim ways?' (1995). It is perhaps no wonder that, after 'some kid came up to me and called me an Asian nun' or as NH put it:

**NH** ...some of the sisters that I have been talking to say that when they were not wearing a hijab they had not problem walking down the street, but once



*they wore the hijab they started getting people sticking fingers up at the and things like that.*

These negative points of their treatment within society, the confusion or dilemmas they face are in direct contrast to the feeling of well being that is derived by the students from their belief in Islam. It is this that I will be examining in the next section.

### **Students' belief in Islam**

This section examines one of the key questions in the research, i.e. how a sample of second generation South Asian Muslims perceive their belief in Islam and how this affects their daily lives, in terms of the actions and decisions that they make. Specifically, the issue here is see how Islam is an important source of meaning for the young people interviewed. There are several points to make here.

1. Religion is a source of guidance in their lives and a source of rules of how to live their lives
2. Islam points them towards a source of certainty, or as I suggest, ontological security for those that are firm believers and as a source of uncertainty for those that are secular.
3. The final point here is that Islam provides, for some of the interviewees a means of coping or, accommodating their identity to the situations that they find themselves in.

The question arises that how do the interviewees get or acquire their belief in religion?<sup>14</sup> It has been argued that belief is a product of socialisation from the family and Muslim community (Anwar, 1985; Jacobson, 1998; Khan, 1977; Parsons & Bales, 1955). Indeed, the depth of involvement of religion within their lives is great, not only through parents, siblings and the extended family, but also through community ties, friends, and peers, the locality that they live in, family back home and with the wider Muslim ummah.

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<sup>14</sup> 100% of the interviewees professed a belief in Islam, to a greater or lesser degree. None of them said that they did not believe or had rejected their beliefs.



In addition to this, Islam is not just about belief, but, it is also a 'way of life'. By this they mean that 'Islam is a complete code of life' and 'at the end of the day it's a way of life.' However, what is observed that despite this commitment to a set of pre-defined rules and regulations within the Koran, Hadith and Sunnah; and those of the family, is that there is a significant degree of contradiction between their beliefs and their practice or, social action.

The next few quotes sum up what the students thought about Islam very well, and they are typical of many of those who had a strong belief in Islam.

*AA Islam means a complete way of life. It is not a religion. Muslim means a person who submits fully to one God, one Creator. If you believe in the Creator you believe in his way of life rather than building up different ways of life by different people and groups bringing conflict. Islam is a complete code of life, it brings peace to people.*

Or;

*NR The legislator is the creator.*

Indicating that the only legitimate law is that of God, however,

*JI In Mecca you can see ...all sorts of people and nobody will push you around. You see the feeling of Islam is there. This is the reason that more people go to Mecca they come back changed dramatically. They see a lot of things that you don't see around. They see black and white together, if they have any problem they solve it, all these sorts of things they are there. Because of man made laws push us from religion and this [is] the reason we are in this trouble. I think Islam to me is important. I cannot live without Islam; Islam gives me more discipline than anything else.... Someone near where I live she just recently became a Muslim. I was talking to my mother yesterday and she said that she has just become a Muslim. As soon as they see the good side of it and they realise that this is more important and they see that it is a disciplined religion. People are taking alcohol and doing all sorts of bad things in the society people cannot see the good side of it, because they have got little knowledge, they think that religion only come in where there is marriage, death, or someone has to pray, and if*



*someone dies they will say to someone 'please pray for me' OK, they limit themselves. What I am saying that this is not religion, this could be part time, when we think or feel like it on Eid days, once or twice in a year, maybe Friday. OK, that's not Islam.*

And this is precisely the point that is well put by JI, that Islam it not so much a religion or a part-time occupation. For him, and for many of the religiously minded, it not much more than a code of behaviour, for them it is a way of being, source of security and identity. Islam is more about living a prescribed moral and ethical code of life which goes beyond choices in social action and decisions that need to be made, indeed, for them, the framework of decisions in their daily lives are already laid down. This *certainty* for them is crucial for their sense of well being in their identity position that they hold.

But for the less religious or secular among the sample, the dilemma of what the importance of Islam in their lives is very problematic and is a source of confusion and concern.

**RK** *I think that religion is like a guide. Some people follow it to the you know. I think that people should follow it; you should do however much you can do. I suppose if you can't do everything that is good, but I don't think that you should put people down for not doing it. The only way to persuade people is not to force them. Some Maulvis [clerics] do. I just met this one Maulvi and he said that if I had time then pray. I thought that that was quite strange for a Maulvi. If you do study it, it is better to come into religion of your own accord rather than be forced into it.*

**LB** *I want to cover my head, I now it is for my good, to become a better Muslim, but I do not know what it is that stops me. First of all putting on the hijab has all these positive connotations, like you are a good Muslim, you are really knowledgeable, but if I put it on all those connotations except I am not going to fall for those, I am not as knowledgeable anyway and plus I do not want to cover my head because I do not find no sin because I am not exactly exposing myself.'*

This justification of not wearing the hijab as not a sin is clearly a way of allaying fears of committing a sin and 'exposing' her hair to others. It is this



justification of their actions among the secular that is interesting. Interesting in the sense that they are grappling with the issue of knowing that they do not practise Islam as they know it should be, but still draw comfort in the little that they do but the fact that they question the role of religion, or at least ask questions is a great departure from their parents bind faith.

In terms of the second issue, that of security, or as I have looked at here, the issue of ontological security, then it is seen that Islam is both a source of strength for some of the interviewees and a source of dilemma for others. This is an important point which needs developing further.

What the data shows is that there is a range of types of identities at play for the interviewed. At one pole there is what is popularly known as the fundamentalists and at the other are the secularists. They each have, according to the data, certain common characteristics that define them as being, at the extreme ends of the scale. However, as not all the students fall neatly into the category of secularist or fundamentalist, then, this is the point at which identity becomes clearly problematic for the students. Identity, to be clear about this point is more problematic for those who have not made (to themselves) final decisions about what they are, where they come from and what their place is in this society. For those who have made the decisions or have come to stable state of ontological security, i.e. the secularists and fundamentalists, they have made decisions that they now actively put into practice and thus find less need to adapt their behaviour to the differing situations that they find themselves in everyday situations ( I will look at this below).

Looking at the identity formation of the secularists and fundamentalists first it is clear that, for those at either end of the scale (a minority of 8 people, five of them fundamentalists and three secularists). The other 32 were in between. Thus the majority, according to the categorisation here fall in between the two extremes and thus find the whole issue of identity accommodation more problematic. Let me look at this in detail by first looking at the secularists, the fundamentalists and then the 'in between's'.



## The Secularists

The key feature of the secularists is the apparent ease with which they have become ethnically effaced. By this I mean that they display or exhibit little or no interest in religion and any role it may have in their lives. They acknowledge that they are Muslims; indeed, all said that they believed in Islam. However, what the secularist display is a distinct tendency to forgo religious or ethnicity, which conflicts with their aims in life. They make choices about what parts of their religion and ethnic culture they use, and use and lose it they do in a very instrumental fashion. In Weberian terms they display a high degree of instrumental rationality.

Take for instance this female student. For her, religion has a constant presence in her life, but only in terms of what comes from her home and family, not within herself.

SB        *I think it [religion] is quite important but I feel that's because that's the way that I have been brought up, although I am not very strict, otherwise I would be wearing a scarf. My parents try to implement it by saying that do Namaaz and read the Koran, at the end of the day it's a way of life. I just feel that it's important. Apart from that...Mum's quite religious, dad when he gets the time. I think he feels that it is important but he can't pray five times a day because of the hours [at work], he feels at the end of the day to be good, if you can't fulfil the five pillars then keep a clean mind and the intention. He knows what this country is like, he's a lot more opened minded than mum. 'Em... I smoke and the first time he caught me...He was like, you know what this country is like you are going to see stuff. I was at school. He said 'that you know what this country is like and you have to rise above it. It's a bad habit'. That was a long time ago and I'm still smoking. I think that he feels that it is the mother's job to keep the girls in line and help them. Obviously he will not just sit back and let it happen, if he has to then he will say don't you really shouldn't, smoking is a bad habit, and it doesn't look nice for a girl to smoke, he will just talk whereas mum will get hyperactive, 'no you don't do that, it's unheard of'. Where as I can question anything with my father I can't question my mother. But I take that due to the way that she has been brought up ...[as for the hijab] Its not a problem wearing a hijab, why do people think that she is forced to wear a hijab, she is forced to cover her hair. This marriage with*



*Imran and Jemima [Khan], I think good luck to him, obviously it's their business, I do wish them the best of luck. Why do people say 'Jemima you poor thing what have you got yourself into you will have to walk behind your husband, you will have to live in the house, you won't be able to go out, you won't be able to wear this, do this, do that'. You know they have these misconceptions about Islam. She willingly wanted to convert what is the problem with that. Obviously she saw and wanted something out of it.*

At different levels here it is clear that in terms of prayer, keeping her outside life from her parents undisclosed, a liberal attitude in mixed marriages indicate someone who, outside the home certainly is more ethnically effaced, while inside the home there is a degree of playing the role of an 'Asian daughter'. However, in terms of identity, while Islam may be a part of her, it is not the central part, otherwise she would be wearing a hijab and not smoking and drinking.

Going on further;

**SB** *I think that if you are trying to carry out Islam, the way of life 100% it can be difficult, you will encounter problems, that is one reason why I probably don't wear the hijab, because it will cause problems, job wise, college, people in the street, it can be a problem. It is difficult for somebody else to accept 5 times a day at work, you can't stop and say I've got to pray now, back in a minute. Having to get a mortgage on a house, interest, stuff like that, its haram, but what are you supposed to do? You pay taxes, but you can't put money into the bank and not take the interest, stocks and shares stuff like that. In order to live in this country there is tuff that you must do. It is difficult. So if you're trying to be 100% religious, it's difficult in this country. But then is there anywhere that you can carry it out 100%?*

And this is the point, is there anywhere that Islam can be carried out 100%. It is this get out clause that some of the students use to excuse themselves of religious duties that they have. It is, for many of them, the justification that they need to feel better and secure about not being 'a good Muslim'.



## The Fundamentalists

The students that fall into this category are easier to identify than perhaps any other of the students. The features that this group have in common that distinguishes them from the others is that they display a fixed view of their position, and to great extent, it is Islam, or a newer version of Islam that is distinct from that of their parents which they adhere to.

To distinguish the version of Islam that this group believe in a radical form of Islam. This 'radical' form of Islam is characterised by a number of broad assumptions such as;

- Islam as a complete social, political and ethical system of life
- It is the only solution to problems of the West, and the dependence of Muslim countries on the West
- Severely gendered roles and responsibilities
- A rejection of capitalism, liberalism, and any other *ism* apart from Islam
- The belief in the *truth* of Islam and the linking of their identity to that of a global Islamic identity that transcends culture, nation and region

The literature shows that it is precisely this form of Islam that is based in Arab nationalism and anti-Western position that leads to this form of fundamentalism (Sayyid, 1997). It is suggested that this form radical Islam is attractive to young British born Muslims (Modood, 1990b; Robinson, 1979), which has become more apparent since the publication of the *Satanic Verses*. Indeed, Modood argues (Modood, 1990b) that Muslims have been cast aside by the Asian secular intelligentsia and have thus tended to reform politically into a marginal but vocal and headline grabbing fringe. Indeed, as Lewis argues, publications in the form of leaflets, booklets and pamphlets are distributed by organisations such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Lewis, 1994), and this is apparent in the activity of Hizb-ut-Tahrir organising and controlling the occupation of the Aldgate campus in the academic session of 1994-1995, as noted in chapter 1



It is clear from the participant observations within the Islamic society from goes on to argue that militant organisations such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir tend to vacillate between appeals to the base instincts of the students that feed on their disenchantment and feeling of alienation of being a discriminated minority. Appeals to a 'return to the Caliphate' and the establishment of 'true Islamic states' in Britain and in the rest of the world, to simple appeals to the ideals of the Sunnah and Koran seem to be characteristic of their methods. They do not present an alternative or accommodation to living in the West, rather, it is complete separation that they desire, whatever the hurdles may be.

The students themselves who fall into this category do actually, to an extent, see the 'fundamentalist' label as a badge of honour, as this student states quite eloquently;

*SA All the media portrays Muslims as terrorists, fundamentalists, fanatics, and so on. It seems that we are all either carrying a bomb or, you can tell by the expression on people's faces they do think you are a fundamentalist. [If it is] sticking to the fundamentals of your belief, then I am. But in the Western context they take it the other way. Terrorism is haram and jihad is not. Terrorism is just carrying out terror on those who are innocent, those who are not even in the battlefield. Like the example in Oklahoma the bombing the first thing the media did was to blame Muslims without a shred of evidence and they found out that it was their own people at the end of the day. I think that from Islam it says that from the time of Mohammed to the day of judgement there will be a struggle between the truth, which is Islam and all others, the Kuffr. Kuffr in Islam means to conceal the truth so there is a friction between good and bad. You will see this in films and in all sorts of ways. But according to Islam that came from the time of when Islam came.*

And her justification for this stance of hers;

*SA Going back into the past you will see that Muslims have always suffered, they were persecuted and tortured and that happened from the time when the Islamic state was established in Medina till the time when it was abolished this century in 1924. There has been conflict and since there is no Islamic state there is*



*a massive revival of people realising their true identity as Muslims, so, with the fall of communism Islam is now the main threat, if this was not so than the largest library on Islam in the world would not be in the Pentagon. Being covered up is a threat to people. Its not just a piece of cloth. Why is Islam always in the newspaper, everyday there is a bit on Islam? There was a little piece about a Hindu who was burnt. But otherwise they pick on Muslim. Peoples ignorance of Islam is stunning. But people are learning.*

Essentially, what she is saying that Islam and Muslims have been oppressed by the West and the current mode of oppression is the racist assumption of terrorism being linked to Islamic fundamentalism. For her Islam is the struggle for truth, of which Islam is the font. This is all couched in a pseudo-historical analysis which explains the current state of Muslims in the world today, and especially in the West.

The choices that this groups make characterise them as making decisions on the basis of value rationality. This follows Weber in the sense that their decisions and choices are based upon a pre-ordained moral and ethical code, which in this case is religious. So even if a particular social act is not to their benefit, they will still carry it out, if their ethics and moral code requires it.

Again, SA was helpful here;

*SA For example if I am sitting here with you, I need to know from Islam that that is allowed. I know for this purpose I am allowed to talk to you. If it was for socialising then I am not permitted to talk to you, because that is called free mixing in Islam so I wouldn't do that. In Islam there are 5 reasons why you can talk to the opposite sex, under work conditions, education, marriage intention talking about Islam and medicine. If it is anything besides that, having chitchat or socialising it is not permitted. In this society all or most of the schools and the universities are mixed unless you go to a specific school where there is only the single sex, I went to a girls school in Acton but otherwise you can't avoid it, in public transport and nearly everything, and in any other country you will have that kind of system....we have a completely different code of life. It is moulded by religion, Islam, and further there is a complete role for a woman and a complete role for a man. We have accepted this and we have utilised it into our culture, and*



*that is part of our life, social, economic, education, everything, that is our foundation that is our survival constitution if you like and because it comes from God we believe in that highly without any questioning at all. Those values are in conflict with the Western people, they do not like it, but they don't want these things to happen. Islam I feel that it is more a way of life than religion. It's not to make life hard for you, it's a religion of ease, it helps. But I believe that Islam is a complete way of life, it is a complete message to human beings and I believe that and looking after your parents is important whatever you do. [So for example] The hijab does stand out, it is obvious when people look at you, they make comments but the thing is, the media, people get their information from the media and the media influences people.*

Or, more specifically, if it is the choice between not wearing a hijab or a beard at a job interview, then Islam will win, in every case.

There is another group who fall between these two types. The data shows that the majority fall within this categories.

### **The Middle Category or Accommodators**

As mentioned above, the key problematic for this section of the sample is that they are the ones out of the whole sample who are struggling or still dealing with issues of identity at this particular stage of their life. For them their state of ontological security is not as well defined and concrete as either of the other two groups. Compared to the secularists for example, they have not become *ethnically effaced* in the sense that religion, family and culture still play a constant role in their lives. They have not been able to detach themselves from their religion to become secular, and they have not detached themselves from life in Britain to a degree to which they reject all that is Western and non-Muslim to become fundamentalists. They are, in essence, a mixture between value rationalist (fundamentalists) and instrumental rationalists (secularists). This is not to say that they are precisely between the two, rather they display characteristics that indicate that their ontological security is more precarious.

**LB** *I don't want to be lead astray kind of thing, I don't know, it's really weird, I think that girls should be careful nowadays, and because I am a Muslim*



*there are so many restrictions and I got to bow to them if I stay at home then I am not going to get into much mischief am I. There are times when I would like to go out, I am not doing anything really ridiculous, but they still think we can't go out, but if explain to them and have a little argument, then yeah I can go. Because since I was young I thought that I was the bad person in my family. My mum is really religious and I look up to her and she does so many additional things and I feel that I am not doing much at all, I want to actually end up like my mum*

This woman, LB is decrying the restrictions that she feels she has imposed upon her life, imposed by her family and based on tradition and religion. However, she acknowledges that this may be for her own good in the sense that she does not do anything 'ridiculous. However, there is a struggle, and the site of this struggle is what she wants to do in her life, everyday things that she thinks she should be free to do, but her parents, culture and religion object to.

The next person discloses how, because she is has 'sinned' by drinking and smoking, she feels that she needs guidance; and feels guilty, or in my terms, is struggling with what she wants to do and what she knows she should not.

**SB** *I think I need someone very religious minded to help, me, someone who has values, religious values. It could be anyone; I don't know who's written down in my kismet. It could be anyone. Although I am not that religious I do smoke and I have drunk so I think someone who may help me on the path, or someone who is religiously inclined or has the values, not someone totally, you know. Here she knows that she should pray five times a day, but, the evening prayers are too time consuming and late at night, especially in the summer.*

A less secularised person, but also showing this issue personal conflict in their identity, between what they want to do and what they do or do not do is NR.

**NR** *Oh Eisha drives me crazy it's so long, so I don't mind missing it, especially during roze when you are so exhausted. Because my brothers and sisters do Fajr and Maghrib namaaz; if I miss those two then I feel guilty*

**NH** *Do you feel guilty about smoking?*



**SB** *'Em, the only reason I feel guilty is because it does not make my father very happy. If anything it upsets my father so I will never, I will try not to be caught by him. I will not smoke around the house or I will justify I know I am going to be seeing him or if he is coming home I won't smoke. It's something I do outside the house. I go in the back garden or I open the bedroom windows really wide, but dad never comes into my room. He does mind, he says that 'you still smoke don't you' and I say yes. He says 'why do you do it its disgusting you've started and you won't be able to stop.' He did say that my reputation is important, what he was trying to say was that if someone saw me trying to do something wrong, they will tell everyone else, and then you are marked, like S's daughter and its because we're all girls its easier to be marked.*

**SB** *No, I don't feel religious.*

**NH** *What do you feel?*

**SB** *I feel like I'm in the middle, in this transition. I haven't questioned enough, I don't do enough to be a Muslim.*

What is happening here is that there is significant internal conflict, between what is laid down by religion, family, culture and tradition. But there is also that they want to have the choice to make decisions about their lives and what they wish to do. However, the point of conflict for them is that they have not fully come to terms with either returning to a religious life, where they follow the rules of religion or that they secularise, and keep their family lives and personal activities separate and not feel this guilt that they constantly feel.

However, there is, in this thesis, an external source of identity that is essential to the young people in the sample, and that is of globalisation and Islam as a global force which plays an important role in the formation of their identity. I will look at this in the next chapter.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The data in this chapter was mainly generated from the 40 interviews conducted with the students. I have presented their positions, thoughts, experiences and acts



within a social context that goes some way to explaining their action. The data indicates that some of the main factors that affect their behaviour, their identity position and their state of security in their position in Britain are those of religion, South Asian culture, family and peers. These are the most significant themes that have emerged in terms of the data in this chapter.

This group are, in the main, the first generation in their family to go to university in the UK (or in nearly all cases, the first in their families in any country). This has thus, brought them into contact with an environment which one hand, is more protected than say the urban street in Camden (P. Desai, 2000), the locality of Walthamstow (Jacobson, 1998), or that of Muslims in community organisations in London (Butler, 2001), but on the other hand, is a more intense environment in the sense that there is little or now familial or community control. In the environment of the university many of them are coming into contact, for the first time with issues such as sex, partners, alcohol, mixing with other young people from many cultures on a daily basis and other issues that they perhaps have not had to confront in any meaningful way before.

They are also undergoing significant challenges to their identity positions in that they are confronted with significant political and cultural issues with which they have not had to deal with before. For instance, many of them will not have met a Jewish person, but at the university they are confronted not only by Jews, but by gays and lesbians, people with disabilities, students who wish to challenge them on their beliefs and lecturers who put forward challenging ideas for which they have to struggle with.

The significance of this is that the university environment, and especially the Old Castle Street and Central House campuses is that they are a hotbed of political activity, some of which they may agree with, and many with which they do not. Couple this with the period of psychological and social formulations of identity; what they feel their position is in Britain, London, Europe, or how they feel within the context of the Gulf War and the Rushdie Affair, or the election of local authority councillors from the British National Party in the local area, and it is clear that the formation of identity is problematic particularly for Muslims within the context of the university.



As a result of the above, decisions have to be made, constantly; to pray or not, to drink or not, to socialise with the opposite sex or not, and this is a constant feature of daily existence for them.

Their position of coming from a Muslims South Asian family also compounds these feelings of uncertainty and this is the point of this chapter, to highlight the sources of behaviour, conflict and identity formulation. Clearly religion, family, thoughts of back home, community and peers are central socialising structures. But the important point is that these are common to all of these young people. What they do, and how they decide to deal with the situations is problematic and, as alluded to above, requires some fancy footwork on their part.

For instance, the group that I called the *accommodators* have in particular the issue of an insecure-but developing identity about which they are constantly having to make decisions about the position they will take on issues such as making friends with Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Sikh students, but also whether they will form romantic attachments to them.<sup>15</sup> For the secularists, this is not so much of a problem; they will have little hesitancy in doing so (whether they tell their parents informed about the state of their current relationship is debatable). The group I have called the *fundamentalists* on the other hand also have no real problem here, they are very unlikely to do so.

The identity position of the secularists and fundamentalists is more secure than the accommodators, in a word, they possess a higher degree of ontological security, their identity is less problematic and this is displayed in their actions which they make either value rationally or instrumentally based judgements.

The accommodators however, fall somewhere in the middle. The security of their state of existence is constantly being challenged in a way that may cause them worry or uncertainty. Ontologically speaking their security is compromised; it is compromised by the reflexive nature of the action-orientated decisions that they have to make, whether it be at home, or within the university, and this will be discussed in chapter 5.

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<sup>15</sup> The issue of whether they are assimilating or integrating is relevant here as this group are working out whether they are integrating or otherwise.



One key area that I have not discussed is that of the role of global events. What is the significance of the Rushdie affair, the Gulf War, the common assumption that Muslims are fundamentalist radicals and terrorists?

What has been seen here is that the inductive method of grounded theory can only go so far in describing and explaining these issues. Grounded theory does not allow the factoring in of supra local/national events in the formulation of the identities of these interviewees. This is where the notion of ontological security becomes problematic. What I am doing here is showing that it is not just identity that is problematic, but that their social reality is potentially in a great deal of flux, depending upon which of the three groups they fall in. One way to explore this is through Giddens' theories of self identity and globalisation (Giddens, 1991, 1993). What this allows me to do is to take wider factors that go beyond the local and national and see how this affects the position of identity. Giddens, while not giving a methodology for the analysis of the effect of globalisation upon the self-identity does allow global factors to be linked in with very personal and local situations. Thus, there is a theoretical and substantive linkage in his work contained within the idea of the global/local nexus, self-identity and security of the self, i.e. ontological security (Giddens, 1993).

These are the questions that I will be examining in the next chapter; what is the importance of global factors on young Muslims in a university in London, how does it affect them, and what are the implications for the tri-category of fundamentalists, accommodators and secularist?



## **CHAPTER 5 - ISLAM AND GLOBALISATION AS INFLUENCES ON IDENTITY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter I looked at the three categories of students in terms of their relationship to religion and living in the UK. The three main findings generated through the methodology of grounded theory were that firstly, the forty students that were interviewed formed three distinct types, the value rational 'fundamentalists', the instrumentally rational 'secularists' and the majority group that fell in between these who I called the 'accommodators'. Secondly, was the students' relationship to religion, what was also identified was that the three groups displayed differing strengths of identity. By this I mean that I found that it is the secularists and fundamentalists who exhibit a stronger sense of identity in that they are less likely to change their behaviour depending upon differing social situations. The third finding was that the middle group, the accommodators, exhibited a greater degree of difficulty in terms of maintaining a stable identity in different situations.

The explanation for this I argued was due to their relationship to three factors. First, religion, that is, the form of religion they believed in. Secondly was the degree of religiosity within the family and the community that they lived in *and* the degree to which they felt bound by the rules, culture and tradition. Thirdly, their relationship to the outside world, or, to put it bluntly, white society. The secularists and fundamentalists had, by and large, worked out their relationship to Western society and were happy or secure in their dealing with it, whether they fully engaged or rejected it, or, as in the case of the accommodators, whether they found their relationship problematic due to their insecure identity position.

In this chapter I will be moving beyond the scope of grounded theory which has provided a methodology enabled the examination and explanation of the position of this group in relation to local and national structural factors such as family and community, religion and white secular Britain. However, what grounded theory is not



able to explain is how and why supra-national or global events and movements have had a significant effect on their lives and how this has been another factor in the development of their current identity position. Here I will be looking at how the globalisation theory of Giddens together with his theory of ontological security form a central part of a person's identity. This takes the issue of identity beyond the local/national sphere and shows how global events and movements have a significant role in the formulation of the identity positions of these young people. So, the aim of this chapter is to first, use Giddens' theory of self-identity to explain the subject identity position held by the students within the context of their lives as Muslims in Britain. In addition to this I aim to show that it is through the processes of globalisation that young South Asian Muslims are constructing their identity positions in Britain.

## **THE BASIS OF A STUDY OF RATIONALITY, MODERNITY AND GLOBALISATION**

As a precursor to the examination of modernity and globalisation, there are a number of issues that need to be discussed. These are the nature of rationality, the role of rationality in religion, particularly Islam, modernity and then globalisation together with the role that globalisation plays in the construction of identity.

I will start by looking at the work of Weber, his theory and methodology with regards to rationality, religion and Islam as a world religion. I will then move on to look at how Weber's examination of Islam was, while worthy is essentially flawed. The latter part will be done within a context of Giddens' framework of modernity, self-identity and globalisation. It is within this context that the data from interviews is best located as it is an examination of globalisation and is a movement away from the limitations of grounded theory, thus allowing a global perspective on identity formation amongst young Muslims in Britain.

### **The issues**

There are two problems; the first is theoretical, and the second is methodological. The theoretical problem is the relationship between action and value on one side, and structure i.e. how Weber did reconcile the hiatus between structure



and action? This is particularly important as it is needed to examine and explain social action in terms of values, meaning, and social structures. Moreover, this is the nub of the issue for this thesis. What is the process of the students deciding to take a particular decision to perform one form of social action over another, what is the basis in values, forms of rationality and the influence of local structures and global structures? In other words, what is it that brings about the students towards particular forms of behaviour in terms of secularists, fundamentalists or accommodators?

I will argue that Weber can only take an examination of these issues so far. There are two reasons for this, first while giving a valid foundation for the examination of modernity he did not conceptualise the supra-national or global in any meaningful sense, and his work on rationality, especially instrumental and value rationality is a particularly good way of examining the choices that the students have to make. It is, for instance, better and more applicable to conceptualising action types than Swidler's idea of a 'tool kit of resources' for decision making for social action. (Swidler, 1986) or Wallman's emphasis on social boundaries (Wallman, 1979a) which only look at the resources used by actors and the dynamics of interactions between individuals and groups as a result conflicting and maintaining boundaries. Weber's examination of Islam is particularly interesting because of his recognition of the significance of monotheism and its nature as a world religion thus giving the study of Muslims and framework of rationality and action. This is significant in that it is the recognition and effect of a global Islam on the students in this study that is important.

## **WEBER AS A STARTING POINT**

The main pattern of thinking in the nineteenth century was that human knowledge fell into two categories, the natural sciences and the study of cultural and social behaviour (Weber, 1964:9). At that time there was a tendency in Germany to emphasise the depth of contrast between the natural and human sciences. What was essential for Weber in the sciences of human behaviour was an appreciation of the 'subjective' point of view or *verstehen*. The predominant historical explanation of human phenomenon was also criticised by Weber; he wished to expound usefulness of general theoretical categories in the explanation of human behaviour. These



general theoretical categories were essential building blocks in establishing proof of causal relations.

The problem that Weber found was that there was a tendency to use the tools of research of the natural sciences in the arena of the human behavioural sciences. Thus any importance that could have been given to the 'subjective' in terms of meaning, points of view, and motivation of action were all squeezed out in favour of the empirical and measurable. What Weber attempted to bridge the gap between the empirical and the subjective points of view 'but he failed to complete the process, and the nature of the half-way point at which he stopped helps to account for many of the difficulties of his position.' (Weber, 1964:11)

Weber emphasised in his methodological work that proof of any causal relationship requires a high degree of logical proof. In this respect;

'the problem of imputation of causal significance to a 'factor' in the antecedent state of a system, it is logically necessary to show, by application of generalised knowledge to the comparison of states, that if the facts of the antecedent state had been different, the later state of the system, the facts to be explained, would also have been different in specific ways. Weber's problem was to define the kinds of generalised categories which met the logical requirements of [a] schema and at the same time embodied the point of view peculiar to the historical-cultural sciences, the use of subjective categories.' (Weber, 1964:11)

In these subjective categories meaning was essential Weber conceptualises social action according to four basic types. The secularists, among the sample are instrumentally rationalists, the 'fundamentalists' as value rational types, while accommodators represent a borderline case of meaningful action.

This is where Giddens ideas on action and structure become useful. He identifies an area of investigation called 'methodological individualism' (Giddens, 1984:213).

'If I have become a sociologist...it is mainly in order to exorcise the spectre of collective conceptions which still linger among us. In other words, sociology itself can only proceed from the actions of one or more separate individuals and must



therefore adopt strictly individualistic methods' (Mommssen, 1965:25). From this is it reasonable to assume that, according to Weber, human action 'exists only as the behaviour of one or more individual human being'(Weber, 1978:13). Giddens argues that Weber's use of action '...is in the sense that subjectively understandable orientation of behaviour exists only as... the behaviour of one or more *individual* human being' (Giddens, 1984:13).

Giddens recognises that there is a genuine difference of opinion between the structural sociologists and himself. As he puts it 'the debate may be complex, but the outline is relatively simple. The methodological individualists think that the search for structural explanations is futile.'(Giddens, 1984:214). But the strengths of methodological individualism is in its ability to explain social action and to understand the reasons and motives behind action and the meaning that actors attach to a particular action *in particular social contexts and situations*. However as Giddens says 'methodological individualism and structural sociology are not alternatives, such that to reject one is to accept the other' (Giddens, 1984:214). In order to get nearer to the issue at hand, I will have to take a look at the Weberian concept of understanding and explanation.

Weber said that what was required was the placing of meaning and action into some form of social context. From this we can move on to causal explanations, on the basis just described. In moving from Weber's concepts from interpretive action to causality he constructed a theory and methodology which is not premised upon natural science but upon social science. Here, 'in this method, "meaningful" interpretations of a concrete relationship are despite the entire "evidence" only hypotheses by imputation" which require "verification" ' (Käsler, 1979:178). He goes on to say that causal chains through oriented motivations are interpreted and verified statistically, there exists in empirical reality a link between the imputed reason for acting and its consequences.

Weber therefore links together action, verstehen, and causality. But does this thesis hold, indeed, did Weber apply this methodology to the letter? Not according to Fulbrook (Fulbrook, :70). Fulbrook argues that the importance of meaning and motives in the causal explanation of social action do not reflect a true explanation in his comparative-historical studies of the world religions. She says that there was a



divergence between Weber's interpretative sociology and 'his actual mode of explanation in his substantive writings on the world religions' (Fulbrook, 1978:71). As we have seen, Weber's interpretative sociology seeks to understand and explain meaningful social action. For this Weber required interpretative understanding of a meaningful complex of action, a casual explanation in terms of motives, and the verification of the hypothesis with reference to some 'ideal type'.

This being the model of investigation, Weber wished to apply this to the development of historical explanation as an aid to discover particular causal chains to specific socio-historical events. Fulbrook notes that while the construction of ideal types and definitions were important for the theoretical aspects of his work, when Weber came to apply these to the explication of causal analysis he came unstuck. Specifically Fulbrook looked at the circumstances of the rise of the Protestant West and its development of modern capitalism. She argues that the role of meanings and motives are only intermediary steps in the sense that 'they act as intervening variables; they influence the direction of events, but do not constitute a sufficient explanation of the course of events in themselves' (Fulbrook, 1978:73). Fulbrook goes further in that she offers an interpretation of Weber and his methodology by saying that Weber's work that structurally what happens is that there are certain forms of idea systems and associated meanings and motivations which can arise and achieve historical efficacy.

Fulbrook further suggests, however, that Weber does not simply look at the effects of certain social action and phenomena, but also places them within a social context. We have already seen that this social contextualisation of meaning and action is essential to the idea of understanding and explanation and, hence, his interpretative sociology. But what of structure and irrationality? If, as Fulbrook argues, motives are only intermediaries, then for her the ultimate stage is the social-structural context in which the motivated action takes place. Ideas, in this context, as far as they influence action, are given relative autonomy, as are the irrational forces of inspiration and genius. These, Fulbrook argues, ferment in a 'social soil' through which lasting action is created.

In her examination of 'The Protestant ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' essay Fulbrook concluded that it was, in its argument, too one sided. Too much emphasis



was placed on meaning and action, and not on any causal linkage between asceticism, rationality, and 'spirit of capitalism'. As far as motive and any causal relationship was concerned, Fulbrook argues that 'The Protestant Ethic' is an example of 'a study concentrating on the analysis of intermediate links and relationships involved in a more complete causal chain' (Fulbrook, 1978:80).

### **Rationality, Religion and Islam**

Bearing these issues in mind how did Weber apply his theory and methods to Islam? Schroeder argues that it is important to look at his conceptualisation of magic and how it was the precursor to the world views of the world religions. It is also important to see how religion differed from magic in Weber's conceptualisation. Weber notes that first of all, the orientation of the mass of believers in the world religions is magical, except for Ancient Judaism and Protestantism. Magic is an essential part of 'the dynamic of world views' (Schroeder, 1992:34). So, while a religion may be free of magic, once it filters down through the strata it will take on different characteristics which are different from its original form, thus allowing religion to be practiced within the context of pre-existing local customs and traditions. But Weber goes on to argue that it is, in fact, magic that is rational and religion that is irrational. But how? In order to answer this he looks at the aims of magic and religion. Magic procures worldly advantage and protection from evil. Religion, on the other hand, seeks 'other worldly' salvation, where the promises are for the after life, whatever that may entail. With respect to Islam, Weber states that it is unique among world religions in as much that it fuses the Islamic world view with the political, Weber also acknowledged the existence of a pre-modern capitalism in Islam. However 'there was no development towards modern capitalism, nor any stirrings in that direction...Above all there evolved no 'Capitalist Spirit' in the sense that is distinctive of ascetic Protestantism'(Weber, 1956:289).

However, he qualifies this by saying that while there was an acquisitive drive, any development towards a modern capitalist enterprise today is and was impeded by traditionalistic tendencies. There were those found in the religious sphere, even though political factors were important, they were secondary to religion. So while there may have been capitalistic tendencies, they were not imbibed or



institutionalised in Islam. They were however inherent within peoples practical daily lives, not their religious lives a distinction that Weber draws.

Turner is particularly useful here. Weber according to Turner has contrasted the 'European tradition of Puritan asceticism and the mystical ethos of Asian religions' (Weber, 1956:230). As a 'prophetic, egalitarian, salvation religion with close derivation from Judaism and Christianity, Islam is a significant test of Weber's thesis on asceticism and rational economic activity'(Weber, 1956:230). According to Turner, there is no causal chain establishing a link between religious belief and capitalism.

Turner then argues that Weber has made factual errors about Islam and hence has proceeded to investigate less important issues. Weber, Turner argues, erroneously focuses on the absence of rational capitalism in the East, rather than looking at the transition of Islam from a monetary economy to one with an agricultural regime (Turner, 1974). So how does Turner see the Weber thesis?

One of the fundamental problems regarding Weber's thesis is on theoretical grounds. In trying to prove the relationship between belief and action, the idea is that beliefs are independent (Weber), so belief cause actions and vice versa. In more detail, there are four points that Turner makes about Weber's thesis. The first point that he makes is that the Protestant ethic entails an idealistic theory of values. Secondly, the Protestant Ethic is an argument about the necessary and sufficient conditions for the emergence of capitalism. Third is the importance of understanding, *verstehen* and finally this thesis underlines a continuity between Marx and Weber where Weber draws attention to the ways in which beliefs are shaped by their socio-economic context.

Now if we hold that Weber wished to examine historical connections of values and meanings, then we must reject the causal primacy of values. According to what Turner described as Weber's third thesis, rather than seeking a causal chain, Weber wished to 'evaluate complex affinities or consequences between social meaning' (Weber, 1956:233). Kolegar quoted by Turner on the same page says that Weber demonstrated a 'mutual reinforcement' between religious ethics and economics. Thus, according to this Weber did not establish a positivist view of causality, rather



he tried to explain action by its subjective meaning. Also related to this is Weber's idea of *wahlverwandtschaft*, i.e. an 'elective affinity' where certain ideas and certain social processes seek each other out so Koleyar saw this as a mutual reinforcement of economic and religious ethics.

But if the emphasis is placed on the idea of elective affinity rather than an empirical cause, there are three problems according to Turner. Firstly if the emphasis is put on the actors' meaning then can Islam be the same as a religion? Secondly, in explaining action in terms of its subjectivity it is difficult to relate meaning to the social structure. Finally, the idea of how groups carried values and beliefs and how elective affinities developed as carrier groups and a particular array of beliefs. This however is close to Marx where belief is socially constructed due to the dominant economic forces.

How does Turner view Weber's analysis of Islam itself? Turner acknowledges the fact that Weber saw Islam as monotheistic, which was based on ethical prophecy, and on the rejection of magic. As far as Weber was concerned, two social groups impeded the move towards asceticism. They were the warrior group as the main carrier of Islam, and the Sufi brotherhoods who developed mystical religiosity. Weber goes on to say that monotheistic Islam well fitted the socio-economic interests of the warrior lifestyle. The quest for salvation was reinterpreted through the notion of  *Jihad*  to the quest for land. Islam never became a religion of salvation, despite its Judeo-Christian background.

For warrior group, in its quest for territorial advancement, asceticism was in keeping with the lifestyle of the warrior caste. The salvation that Islam did reach was for religious reasons alone. The Sufi brotherhoods used this to develop mysticism. So for Weber, Sufism was mass religiosity which enabled Islam to reach its conquered peoples through their indigenous symbolism and ritual. Sufism thus watered down its monotheism to ritualistic and magical elements. The coexistence of both groups, then Sufis and warriors, led to a feudalistic spirit with all its slavery, serfdom, and polygamy. Therefore, according to Weber, Islam was not able to lift itself out of its feudal stagnation.



Turner, however, looked in a different direction on the state of capitalist development (or not of Islam). He said that the explanation was not to be found in the 'spirit of capitalism', or in any elective affinity between the needs of warriors and militaristic values, but rather in a string of prerequisites for the development of modern capitalism. In this vein Turner turned to Weber's analysis of Islamic law. There are two sources of Islamic law. The first, *shariah*, is ad hoc lawmaking and legal judgements which are derived logically from general laws. The second is *qadi law*, which is irrational law. Here the law makers do not follow set principles but judge each case on its particular features. This lacks generality and stability.

Sharia is substantive and rational, while qadi law is unstable and particularistic. The sharia is inflexible and not adaptable, in other words timeless. These two forms of law were, according to Weber, products of a patrimonial rulership rather than being based on the religious facts of Islam. So, while the 'occidental' bourgeois preferred rational laws, the eastern rulers prefer the irrational and unstable legal forms, which legitimated their grip of power. This judicial explanation coupled with the idea that Muslim nations' control because of a patrimonial bureaucracy controlled by troops in foreign conquered lands, was lost by the centre, i.e. the militaristic political groups. But this begs the questions as to how they (the warrior groups) lost power over the vast Muslim empire, and indeed, as Weber and Turner all agree on the fact that there was a pre capitalist economy in the Orient, why did not the middle class bourgeoisie take political power and consolidate the capitalistic mode of production and consumption? It is with this issue that I wish to turn to Sami Zubaidi who addresses precisely these issues.

### **Zubaidi - Redefining the problem.**

Zubaidi asks whether a religion or an ideology could have 'causal efficacy in determining social secular action and whether the effect it does have will depend on this configuration of social factors' (Zubaidi, 1972). Zubaidi suggests that Weber looked at religions historically and that the peoples rationalised their circumstances in religious terms and adapted these particular systems of production and domination. Also, Zubaidi argues that Weber did put forward a causal link between the Protestant Ethic and the origins of modern capitalism. This is enhanced in the introduction to the works on the religions of India and China (Weber, 1952, 1963, 1967).



As far as Islam is concerned, Zubaidi traces the development of the religion up to the middle ages, and he identifies three distinct phases. They are briefly firstly, the charismatic stage. At the time of Mohammed's call to Islam there was great prosperity, Mecca being on one of the central trade routes through Arabia. The social organisation was on the basis of kinship and tribal lines and the allegiance of most people and social groups was towards that of their fellow kin and tribe. But the accumulation of wealth among some merchants cut across tribal lines, leading to the emergence of some form of class system. In this the richer merchants exploited the and oppressed the others who were weaker than themselves. This breakdown of tribal and kinship allegiances led to much social and spiritual malaise, thus rendering the people more receptive to Mohammed's ethical message. Thus the group that formed around Mohammed was, politically, sovereign, and not based on tribal or kinship lines but rather around a common belief. This was important in making Islam universalistic in nature. In this period the rules of the embryonic society were there which were inspired through Mohammed and were codified in rational and formal Law. This model, Zubaidi states, later broke down with increased autocratic bureaucracy borrowed from the Persians. But this period was later to be seen as some 'golden age of Islam' to which discontented Muslims have turned back and especially the students who I have characterised as fundamentalists in this study.

After the third Caliph's death the empire now encompassed the whole of Arabia, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. But the empire was too vast to be controlled by the methods and principles of Medina's community of believers. In stage two, in the year 661, the empire was ruled by an imperial dynasty. This was characterised by bureaucratic and military rule of the various parts of the empire. Therefore, in order to consolidate central rule over the people of the empire, the people had to be controlled and subordinated and the Persian and Byzantine bureaucratic-military control was best suited for this purpose. The third stage was characterised by the fragmentation of the empire, which had now reached Spain. Zubaidi puts two forward two explanations for this one economic and the other political.

Economically, the empire could expand as long as there was enough revenue from taxes and military booty to sustain the large armies. But, once the expansion stopped, new methods of taxation had to be devised. This increased the bureaucracy



and thus led to the second problem. The political problem was the control of the various factions in the empire. The tighter the control of the empire, the more likely people were to revolt. This characterised the structure of the empire. Right up to the time of the Ottoman revolution and rule in the fifteenth century the cities of Islam followed the fate of their rulers. They flourished during stability, but their trading and manufacturing suffered during long periods of war.

What has to be asked now is why the middle class bourgeoisie did not take power from the military groups. We have seen how there is no great contradiction between trade and Islam. So what prevented the bourgeoisie from consolidating their economic power and entrenching a capitalist mode of production? Zubaidi argues that it is the relationship of the merchant classes *vis-à-vis* the dominant military-bureaucratic classes.

A military, merchant and trading class who dominated the Muslim world for much of the time until the end of the Mughal period in India and the decline of Islam in Europe left Muslims with a sense of loss, not only of empire, but also of the wealth and prestige that accompanied the status of the emperor. However, the point of the above is that Islam, or more specifically, Muslims are not immune to capitalistic pursuits, as long as there is an islamically orientated culture that they practice. In contemporary Britain, what Muslims are facing is a cultural, ethical and moral system that seems to them somehow corrupt and immoral.<sup>16</sup> It is this that Muslims in Britain find difficult. While they can deal with the structures of capitalism in terms of the political, economic and legal, they find it difficult to adjust to the moral norms and values of a secular society, especially since South Asia is anything but secular. It is a place where religion saturates daily life and every aspect of social action-for Muslims at least.

I have shown in the above section how Weber's characterisation is problematic, both in terms of his view of Islam and in his application of methodology to its study. But, the point is that his concept of rationality and rational types is an important orientating device in my characterisation of the students who were interviewed and

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<sup>16</sup> For instance, obtaining a mortgage which requires the payment of interest is haram. However, so called Islamic Mortgages allow Muslims to lease a property that a bank pays for in total and then the loan amount is fixed and paid off. Initially however, this required the payment of stamp duty twice but in the recent HM Treasury budget this double stamp duty has been abolished. (O'Hara, 2003)



observed. What the ideal types of rationality: instrumentally rational and value rational serve to classify social action and behaviour based upon the degree of belief in their religion and in aspects of their homes and families.

I have also demonstrated that Weber was also too narrowly focused on particular forms of Islam and ignored the mercantile tendencies of not only early Islam, but also of modern Islam. Within this context, Muslims in Britain, and the students in the study while being subject to values, social action and the social mores of secular capitalist Britain there is a profound effect of globalisation upon this group. This is what I will now turn to, i.e. globalisation within the context of modernity.

## **GLOBALISATION AS A MANIFESTATION OF MODERNITY**

I will look at the development of modernity in the context of Weber's concept of history and therefore the evolutionary process towards modernity. In this light I will move towards an examination of globalisation and how it confirms the project of modernity. In short, I will first examine modernity in the light of Weber and then use globalisation as a manifestation of modernity. I will then look at how Turner describes the project of modernity in a critical look at how the 'classical sociological' position is used to understand a particular concept of modernity. (Turner, 1992)

World religions according to Whimster and Lash provide an intellectual justification for *man's* place in the world. The agents of religion or priests articulate the 'cognitive duality', i.e. the immediate everyday world, and the material world (ideal and material worlds). This pre-religious and post-religious realisation is argued to correspond to the primitive and the modern.

But what about the modern world? Whimster and Lash suggest that the modern world is characterised by a process of secularisation in the sense that 'the order of religious legitimating is certainly peripheralised, if not eliminated' (Whimster & Lash, 1987:6). So does this mean that in the modern world science replaces religion as the medium of legitimation? Weber says that it does.

This modernisation as rationalisation involves;



- The differentiation of social spheres and quasi autonomous institutions;
- The growth of abstract conceptualisations of sovereignty and power which, in turn, made possible the gradual development of the abstract citizen in the urban city culture of Western Europe;
- The extension of formal, abstract rationality to the creation of law, the formulation of theology as a science, the transformation of architecture into a utilitarian practice, and the conversion of medicine from a manual act into an abstract science of disease entities;
- The adoption of bureaucratic standards of procedure in all major public institutions; The final separation of the private (emotional) and public (rational) world within which separate mentalities and characters were to develop;
- The secularisation and disenchantment of culture, producing not uniformity of values, but a polytheistic reality of competing perspective without integrating or unifying principles.

For Weber rationality has a multiplicity of meanings where a particular sense of a word is specific to a particular context. Weber himself states that;

'A thing is never rational in itself, but only from a particular point of view. For the unbeliever every religious way of life is irrational...If this essay [The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism] makes any contribution at all, may it bring out the complexity of the only superficially simple concept of the rational' (Weber, 1976:194).

Brubaker notes that 'rationality was the great unifying theme in Max Weber's work...Weber's disparate empirical studies converge on one underlying aim, to characterise and explain the development of the "specific and peculiar rationalism" the distinguishes modern Western civilisation from every other.' (Brubaker, 1984:1). Brubaker goes on to note that the word *rational* pertains to sixteen possible senses of the word;

...the characterisation of modern capitalism and ascetic Protestantism: deliberate, systematic, calculable, impersonal, instrumental, exact, quantifiable, rule



governed, predictable, methodical, purposeful, sober, scrupulous, efficacious, intelligible, and consistent. (Brubaker. 1984:2)

Weber defines four types of action, two of which are rational, and two not rational (irrational). In *Economy and Society* (Weber) the four types are characterised thus.

- Instrumentally rational (Zweckrational) determined by expectations as to the behaviour of the object in the environment and of other human beings; these expectations are used as 'conditions' or 'means' for the attainment of the actors' own rationally pursued and calculated ends.
- Value rational (Wertrational) determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake or some ethical, ascetic, religious, or other form of behaviour independently of its prospect of success.(Weber, 1978:24-5)

The other two, affectual and traditional action refer to the emotional and habitation respectively. It therefore follows from Weber that which is neither *zweckrational* nor *wertrational* cannot be rational.

### **Ideal types and Rationality applied to the students in the study**

I will now turn to the construction of ideal types. An ideal type, in Weberian terms, is a 'construction of certain elements of reality into a logically precise conception' (Gerth & Mills, 1991:59). The concepts are ideal in as much as they are pure or absolute, not as a prescription to a particular way of life.

The purpose of this, for Weber, was to concepts and categories that were logical and unambiguous and 'far removed from historical reality, or of using less precise concepts, which are more closely geared to the empirical world.' His interest in comparing different civilisations led him towards the considering of 'extreme and 'pure cases' (Gerth & Mills, 1991:60). Indeed:

'These cases became "crucial instances" and controlled the level of abstraction that he used in connection with any particular problem. The real meat of history would usually fall in between such extreme types; hence Weber would approximate



the multiplicity of specific historical situations by bringing various type concepts to bear upon the specific case under his focus '(Gerth & Mills, 1991:60).

Rationality is subject to classification within ideal types. Indeed the division of rationality into four specific types could be seen as a construction of a typology of the various forms of rationality. As Albrow puts it '...ideal types of rationality were doubly rational and the dividing line between simply providing points of orientation and contributing to a science of action became very thin' (Albrow, 1990:154).

Methodological issues notwithstanding, the placement of action into one or the other ideal type group is not as simple as it first may seem. For a start it would be foolhardy to think that it is possible to categorise all the actions of a person, place them within one category and simply describe them as a secularist or a 'fundamentalist'. What has to be done is a process of categorisation at an abstract level and this is where I propose a refinement of the terms 'secularist' and 'fundamentalist', both as analytical constructs and as descriptive terms. 'Fundamentalist' is, in itself, a very problematic term. This is particularly so because it has a grave political intonation. The word fundamentalist has, since the 1970's been associated with terrorism, religious extremism, and revolutionary political movements. It also conjures up the image of the veil, the gun, and the Koran (quite often all at the same time). This is inaccurate. Fundamentalism has to, in my opinion, be likened more to a particular form of religious culturalism, which does not need to use violence but, rather, the more powerful 'word of God' rhetoric to what could be described as the disenfranchised masses and to traditionally conservative middle classes.

The process also has to be seen in the context of Islam being a religion with globalising tendencies, and it is this to which I now turn.

Above I have looked at the role of rationality in the development of modernity and the role of rationality in social action. The starting point for this thesis was in constructing ideal types of action for South Asian Muslim students in the university. The ideal types of secularists and fundamentalists, here, are acting as orientating devices from the data in the study. What grounded theory, as discussed above, does is place the lives of the students within a social and political context, while the role of



the ideal type concept acts as a link between the theories generated from the interview data. The Weberian ideal types have validity in theory and methodology but what was observed through grounded theory was that the interview material threw up variations on the two ideal types -value rationalists (fundamentalists) and instrumental rationalists (secularists). The cause of these variations was the situations that the students occupied in different arenas of their lives. These two categories are, in essence, social constructs which seek to provide direction to initial observation and it was not expected to find research subjects that fit *exactly* into these social constructs. There were, however, thirteen students who approximated to either of these ideal types, while the rest (twenty seven) were variations of the themes.

## **CHARACTERISING ISLAM IN TERMS OF RATIONALITY**

I have argued that there are multiple forms of practice amongst Muslims, and this is a result of the subjects particular world view. These world views are dependent on the type of action to which an individual is subject. In the case of 'fundamentalists' it is to be argued that the social action in which they are involved is that of the value rational type, while for the 'secularists' it is of an instrumental rational type (Zweckrational).

### **Value Rationality and fundamentalists**

How can the fundamentalist students be associated with value rationality? In the words of Weber it is '...determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other forms of behaviour, independently of its prospects of success (Weber, 1978:24-25). The concept of value rationality has the conceptual advantage of allowing the 'maximum degree of determinacy and intelligibility at the same time' (Albrow, 1990:141). Determinacy presupposes that knowledge of the practical and experiential are crucial to the choice of means to ends. How one comes to choose the suitable means to a particular end is a matter (apart from chance as this is outside the realm of choice-unless one chooses to guess and then in any case it is not rational) of the degree of knowledge, subjective knowledge (or learned experience) and empirical or practically gained knowledge. It could also encompass abstract thought in the determination of the 'best' way forward.



There is another type of rationality in Weber's classification which is linked to the above type, and that is traditional rationality. This is '...determined by ingrained habituation' (Weber, 1978:25). In the same sense after value rational action has become part of the daily or habitual action an individual that it intermingles with rational action or to the extent that it is be difficult to distinguish one from the other. If for example the 'bulk of all everyday action to which people have become habitually accustomed...' is traditional rational (Weber, 1978:25). But that this traditional rationality is carried out 'regardless of possible cost to themselves...' (Weber, 1978:25). An example of this is when a person takes time out of working hours to pray at a financial price to themselves. They are sense answering a religious call, in other words performing a religiously significant action is according to Weber involved- in as far as the value rational involves answering 'commands and demands' (Weber, 1978:25). But this becomes so ingrained as to no longer require a conscious belief in order to perform the action. This is characterised by *routinisation*. Is there a contradiction? The content of the VR action is derived from traditional rationality that is the trying to inculcate tradition. But all types of rationality can degenerate into routinisation or habituation, e.g. routinisation in the 'inner calling'. In other words that which is not driven by ideas, but rather through habituation, through repeated practice (regardless of the motive of practice).

### **Instrumental Rationality and secularists**

I will now look at how a secular way of thought can be commensurate with instrumental rationality. Instrumentally rational action is those actions that are 'determined by expectations as to the behaviour of objects in the environment and other human beings; these expectations are used as "conditions" and "means" for the attainment of actors' own rationally pursued and calculated ends' (Weber, 1978:24). There are three conditions to be fulfilled for the action to be of the IR type. These are IR when the ends, means and secondary result of the action are all taken into account. It involves rational thought in deciding the best means to the desired end. If the choice is made on the basis of a value or tradition then it can no longer be called instrumentally rational. So a person who (as in the above example) does not take time out of working hours to pray because they would either lose out financially or that it would be a source of embarrassment could be said to be acting with instrumental



rationality. They may feel embarrassed or constrained by a display of religiosity in a secular and public environment.

It is important to note that Weber's formulation that the types of rationality were not mutually exclusive and that there was an allowance for crossing the boundaries, as is seen for traditional rationality and value rationality. But in the way that I wish to use them I would wish to construct the ideal types of rationality and therefore the ideal types of fundamentalism and secularism as being also mutually exclusive.

But keeping value and traditional rationality as two mutually exclusive and distinct entities is problematic when daily action is considered. It could be shown that not all actions fall within one or the other distinct groups.

### **Islam, 'fundamentalism' and secularisation as value and instrumental rationality.**

Anderson argues that 'Muslim communities, like all religious communities, are imagined' (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1990:4). That is, that they are created through the vision faith and practice of their adherents. The faith of a collective, which tends to formulate itself into an imagined or socially constructed community, is subject to the prevalent culture, geographical location, and the social and political structure of the time and place of that particular society. The adherents to the 'faith' may point to an unbroken history to an ancient time from which the customs, traditions, etc. are drawn. It ignores the 'social nature' of the faith and, implicitly, the socially constructed knowledge. It further ignores the evolution, addition to, and deletion of certain practices and customs from the corpus of belief.

This is the case with Islam and is demonstrated clearly within the interview data. There is, in practice, selective historical hindsight which is selective only in that it wishes to construct for living in a modern world which is undergoing a process of globalisation. Islam is seen by its adherents as a timeless self, sustainable, all embracing (in terms of ethnicity, culture, politics) and hence a universal, if not global, religion (Watt, 1998).



Turner describes a certain form of fundamentalism in a way that could be useful as an analytical term. He uses the term 'ascetic fundamentalism' (Turner, 1992:164). He says that 'ascetic fundamentalism far from being incompatible with modernity actually pushed societies from close-communal to open-associational.' Indeed 'fundamentalism appears now in a "reactionary" guise as the defender of the project of modernity against [the] disjointed pluralism of post modernity' (Turner, 1992:164). This ascetic fundamentalism is similar to the Protestant asceticism found in Weber's Protestant ethic. This I feel is a point worth pursuing. The other characteristics of the Protestant ethic may be found in ascetic fundamentalism, and certain parallels may be drawn from this.

One can look at the terms in the sense of action types, value rational fundamentalism points to those actions that are determined through a value rational method. In addition to this value fundamentalism points to an ascetic other worldly world view. Where, for example, pleasure is deferred to an 'afterlife' or to situation which is religiously legitimate, such as a sexual relation between husband and wife, or the consumption of pleasurable artefacts, again, in a religiously legitimate way (*halal*) as opposed to illegitimately (*haram*). The value part of the term refers to the value rationality action type of Weber, and for the while can be taken as that to which I have referred to above. Fundamentalism is a term which is left hanging on. It can be described as a *function* of the ascetic value mode of action. By that I mean that fundamentalism can be said to be found where there is an ascetic value rational way of life in operation among individual or a collection of Muslims. If asceticism or a value rational mode of action is absent (or for my purposes both together) then it cannot be called fundamentalist.

Instrumental secularism points to instrumentally rational mode of action. It also indicates an aesthetic view of pleasure for itself in the consumption of goods and services, which would link it into the globalisation of mass culture. In this sense it indicates an acceptance of this worldly outlook, where pleasure and consumption is for the here and now rather than saving oneself for the other world. The secular part of the term is an admittance to this other worldly outlook, and instrumentally rational action could be used to further ones 'life chances' rather than 'the other life-chances'



## Two ideal types: secular and 'fundamentalist'

Commentators have suggested that;

'in trying to overcome the cultural dislocation experienced under colonial rule, former colonial states are in the process of reasserting their 'own' ethnic identities and culture...Thus in Pakistan, 'Westernisation', used by reactionary forces to discredit any forces that aim at social or economic progress, finds itself less opposed to 'Eastern' than to Islam, or, when it is counterpoised as 'Eastern' this in itself is defined as Islamic...As a result of this and the absence of a 'national' identity, Pakistanis often seem to want to take a quantum leap backwards to the Arabian societies of the seventh century in an attempt to negate centuries of non-Islamic history and culture' (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987:158).

Hence the problem, this phenomenon is not just confined to the Indian Subcontinent; indeed it could be argued that this state of affairs is common in Muslim *cultures* across the globe. The harking back to a 'golden age' of Islam when a 'truly Islamic' social, political, and economic system was allegedly in operation.

In a modern secular Western country, such as Britain, there arises a problem of where do Muslims locate themselves in terms of identity and culture, where they are in a hostile environment.<sup>17</sup>

While Islam proscribes the consumption of pork, alcohol, sex outside marriage, and the free mixing of the sexes, (among others), many of them consume forbidden foods and participate in forbidden activities. This 'group' seems to hold a 'this worldly' view. They have adapted, and, to an extent to be explained, even adopted the lifestyle of the West. Regarded as an ideal type, they have a modernist and instrumental outlook, are upwardly mobile, and exhibit a degree of ethnic effacement.

The fundamentalist ideal type consists of people who are conservative in attitude. They adhere strictly to a constructed identity, and their actions are, within

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<sup>17</sup> It is inaccurate to use the term 'South Asian' as an umbrella term. Indeed, not only is it inaccurate, but also gross homogenisation of a very diverse group (P. Desai, 2000; Modood, 1994). People of South Asian origin cover a multitude of distinct and discrete identities. For example the background of South Asian Muslims may be middle class Gujarati's or working class Mirpuri's. They may be single working class Shiite women or middle class married Sunni's. It is clear that the term South Asian Muslims is an umbrella, one that is used for convenience and convenience only. It would be inaccurate to use the term as a descriptive or explanatory tool. It does not for instance take into account the cross linkages of class, gender, or geographical origin of their family. That will be dealt with in the particular rather than in the general.



this vein, value rational (versus the instrumental rational of the secularist). They have an 'other worldly' outlook and tend to insulate themselves from the influences of modernity by surrounding themselves with all that is not of the West, i.e. in what is Eastern. In the University Muslim students are in the process of constructing a 'fundamentalist' identity. Hence the popularity of extreme right wing fundamentalist groups within the university such as the Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Groups such as this draw their ideology and policies from militant Islamic groups from as far a field as North Africa, and in particular the Indian Sub-Continent.

This leads me to the problematic of the 'fundamental' and the secular. Why are they problematic? Two reasons, first the concepts are problematic as far as they are social constructs that I have created in the formulation of the problem. I have used the Weberian terms of ideal types, and using this theoretical concept will give rise inevitably to a particular epistemology.

The second problematic is that by constructing this dualism, I have placed people in one or the other category. As has been said before about the term 'South Asian', secular and fundamentalist are too convenient to use 'in the field'. Both groups are not homogenous. Indeed I propose that they show a greater of internal diversity and cross linkage between the two. For example the student who falls in the fundamentalist category with a religious world view but is a student of Business Studies and who wishes to enter the banking profession and has an intimate relationship with an unmarried partner. Or the secular looking student who consumes alcohol but also fasts during the month of Ramadan.

## **ISLAM AND GLOBALISATION**

I will now turn to the issue of Islam as a social belief system in the context of a world that is undergoing a process of globalisation. The problem is put well by Turner. He argues that there are two aspects to the problem. The first is the emergence of a 'global Islamic political system' and the second is the 'cultural



reaction of Islamic fundamentalism against Westernise and consumerism' (Turner, 1991a).<sup>21a</sup> So the problem is that:

'Islam [being] perfectly compatible with the modernisation project involving as it did, a high degree of secularisation of traditional religious cultures, but Islam cannot deal satisfactorily with post modernism which threatens to deconstruct religious messages into mere fairy tales and to destroy the everyday world by the challenge of cultural diversity' (Turner, 1991a:162).<sup>22a</sup>

Does it follow that Islam itself is compatible with modernity and not with globalisation? It could be argued that the 'commercial tradition' of particular forms of Islam are, in a sense, capitalistic in nature, but that Sufism is not.<sup>18</sup>

## APPLYING GIDDENS' GLOBALISATION THEORY TO THE DATA FROM MUSLIM STUDENTS IN LONDON

I have already looked at one particular version of this in Turner's definition. Giddens however puts forward a brief initial 'working' definition of modernity. He refers to modernity as all 'modes of social life or organisations which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less world-wide in their influence.' (Giddens, 1991:1)

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<sup>21a</sup> Turner is characterising Islamic fundamentalism as a *reaction* to Westernism. Watt argues the reverse. Watt presents the thesis that Islamic fundamentalism, rather than a reaction to Western modernity, is a socio-political force resisting post-modernity and trying to keep the certainties of the modernist meta-narrative, within which, again, I propose is to a large degree compatible with a conservative form of Islam (i.e. the non Sufi type). Indeed, the technological products of modernity are in use by, what could quite easily be called 'fundamentalist' organisation such as the Pakistani *Jamaat-i-Islami* (in terms of methods of communication, travel and dissemination of information) and the 'terrorist' organisation as *Hamaas* (who use modern military technology and strategy in order to further their particular campaign).

<sup>22a</sup> A good example of turning religious messages and history can be found in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. In this novel the prophet Mohammed is portrayed as *Mahound* and his wives as prostitutes. It also presents certain verses from the Koran being delivered by the Devil. This strikes at the very heart of traditional (if not most) of the Islamic faith, hence the severe and unexpected backlash to the novel. As Watt, in *Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity* argues, if Muslims wanted to read a critical academic appraisal of Islam, then they would find libraries full of them. What seems to have happened in Rushdie's case is that rather than analysing religion, he has (and it must be remembered that it is a novel, not an academic study) what is seen by Muslims as probably the most sacred and revered part of the religion. Another point in this issue is that the Bengali writer Tasneema Nasreen, who at this moment is in hiding in Dhaka, after an interview to a newspaper has said that the Koran has to be reinterpreted. Watt has argued that there is doubt about the 'authenticity' of the Koran as the word of God. This in itself for many is heresy. But Watt (and others) have the double advantage of first being a non Muslim, and second writing academically. This tells us that criticism, whether in literature or non fiction is only tolerable if from outside of the religion, and the more couched in the language of academia it is, the less likely it is to receive a fundamentalist criticism.

<sup>18</sup> This raises questions again of what one means by the term Islam. It also, as far as the capitalistic nature of Islam is concerned, is an argument supported by Turner in *Marx and the End of Orientalism* and Weber and Islam, Rodinson in *Islam and Capitalism*, and Watt in *Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity*.



From this definition Giddens identified features which identify the modern from the pre-modern. First, there is the pace of change. The development of technology has enabled a greatly increase in the rate of change that has occurred this century compared with the pre-modern era. Second there is compression, where the areas of the globe are drawn closer together, for example social movements across the globe. Finally there is the *nature of modern institutions*. Here there is the development of what we now call the Nation State, and the constituent institutions of the state. For example, the security forces, the welfare system among others.

What has modernity to offer? For Weber modernity (or the modern) gave us material progress at the price of an expanding bureaucracy that crushes creativity and autonomy-his 'iron cage.' It follows that the consequences of modernity tends to be pan-national. The four main spheres where this takes place – industrialisation, economics, the political, and cultural. Political power of governments of the 'North' whose influence is global, and finally economic power, which is influenced by and influences the previous two.

However, what has to be explained is why are these four taken as characteristic of modernity by Giddens? There are three points here. The first is to examine the 'engine' of change. For Marx the engine was capitalism, for Durkheim it was the division of labour and the change from organic to mechanical solidarity. For Weber it was rationality in the form of the Protestant Ethic which was the catalyst for the rise of rational capitalism. Giddens argues that modernity is not exclusive to any one of the above, but rather 'multidimensional on the level of institutions'

The second feature is what Giddens calls 'a concept of society' (Giddens, 1991:14). Here, rather than look at nation states, or collectivities of social relations Giddens argues that there is a need to look at how social systems 'bind' time and space; i.e. what he calls *time space distanciation*. This is where 'the conditions under which time and space are organised so as to connect presence and absence'(Giddens, 1991:16). There are indeed nation states, but they are interwoven geopolitically, socially and culturally.

Thirdly what has to be addressed is the relationship between sociology and *action* under conditions of modernity. Sociological knowledge depends on concepts



and language of lay people. However the language of the social sciences re-enters general usage in a modified form. So Giddens argues that in order to explain modernity one has to examine 'the extreme dynamism and globalising scope of modern institutions and explain the nature of discontinuities from traditional cultures.' (Giddens, 1991:16)

'Modernity is inherently globalising...' says Giddens. It is now redundant to talk of a bounded society and also that analysis should be looked at in terms of social life which is ordered across time and space. What he has call time-space distanciation. This leads on to an examination of *local involvements* and the *interaction across a distance*. So

'the relation between local and distant social forms and events become correspondingly "stretched." Globalisation refers essentially to that stretching process, in so far as the modes of connection between different social contexts or regions become networked across the earth's surface as a whole. Globalisation can thus be defined as *the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.*' (Giddens, 1991:64) [my emphasis].

A good example of this is religion.

Let me examine this a little further. Giddens rejects the theories of Wallerstein and McLuhan, and himself plumps for the argument that the modern institutions that he identified under modernity are similar to global institutions. There are therefore four institutions that make up the 'dimensions of globalisation. The nation state, world capitalist economy, world military order, and the international division of labour.

The main centre of power in the global system is the capitalist states. They have the economic power, and crucially, control over the means of violence, that is the military and internal security forces. The policies of the capitalist states in the world economy are insulated to a degree from transnational corporation, and vice versa. While the transnational corporations may wield immense economic and political power they are not a nation-state, and therefore do not control the means (legitimate) to violence, that is the control of the military. They do however act as



dominant agents within the world economy. The spread of markets, whether they deal in commodities, or even money, is now global. As a result, there is developing a new division of labour. Production of goods is moving away from the 'north' to the 'South'; where labour costs, laws, and environment controls are much looser.

There is a growing interdependence of the world raises issues of security (in terms of the interest of the powerful). There is hence, to a degree, the global control of 'world super powers' i.e. the United States, and until recently the Soviet Union. Between them, they were able to intervene virtually anywhere if not directly, then through the use intermediaries. For example the United States supplying arms through Pakistan to Afghani rebels to fight the Soviets, and the Soviets arming India in successive wars with, Pakistan.

Now, is globalisation a necessary consequence of modernity or as Giddens puts it 'is modernity a Western project' (Giddens, 1991:174)? The *nation-state and systematic capitalist production* originate in specific periods in European history, and have few parallels elsewhere. This has been possible simply due to the sheer scale of power of both these spheres. For Giddens, the consequence of modernity is inevitably globalisation and it is a product of modernity. The spread of the ethos of modernity all over the globe is precisely that-globalisation.

For Robertson social theory is 'both a product of and an implicit reaction to-as opposed to a direct engagement with-the globalisation process' (Robertson, 1990:15). But who is included (or just as important, who is excluded) within the process of globalisation? During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century it meant the West and the non-Europeans, i.e. Asians, and this is what was called the 'international society'. What was ignored was Africa, Latin America, and the rest of the world. Robertson sees a problem in global theorising. 'The distinction between the global and the local is becoming complex and problematic. So much so we should speak in such terms as the global institutionalisation of the life world and the localisation of globality'(Robertson, 1990:19).

He argues that globalisation is a recent phenomenon linked 'intimately' to modernity and modernisation (as well as post modernity and post modernisation). So where does he locate his concept of globalisation? He says quite clearly that



the concept of globalisation per se should be applied to a particular series of developments concerning the *concrete structuration as a whole*..

...structuration has to be moved out of its quasi and philosophical context...its confinement within discourses between subjectivity-and-objectivity, individuality-and-society, voluntarism-and -determinism and so on (Robertson, 1990:20).

Robertson says that there are actual phenomenon that indicate the trend towards globalisation of the world. He cites the examples of a potential universal proletariat, the global triumph [or attempted] of a particular religion, the yielding of nationalism to free trade, the world-federalist movement, or the world-wide triumph of a trading company. There may have happened at specific periods in history, but not in the scale as they have today. Indeed Robertson says that there are specific sequences of 'mini-globalisations'.

Globalisation therefore be described by some as Westernisation, imperialism, or even civilisation. But what has *actually* happened that indicates the global interdependence and consciousness. He argues with Giddens in saying that the nation state is central to the global outlook. This was confirmed after the First World War. These then developed interdependent relations between states, and groups of states. We now have a world-wide capitalist system, global markets, global media (CNN) etc.

### **The self and modernity and Islamic identity**

For Giddens the advent of modernity was a decisive break from traditional or pre-modern forms of society due to what he calls the 'dynamism' of modernity (Giddens, 1991) which undercuts traditional habits and customs, and thus has an impact globally (Giddens, 1991). Modernity also affects the daily lives of people and their personal experience. Giddens argues that modernity operates in between two polar extremes, extensionality and intentionality, the sum of which being the distinctive features of modernity. The extensional refers the globalising influences and intentionality being people's personal dispositions).<sup>19</sup> What Giddens provides is a mechanism to the process of how an identity is formed and the interviews provide the source of these identities. There is under modernity:

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<sup>19</sup> It is not clear what Giddens means, is he talking about their mental or social dispositions



‘new mechanisms of self -identity which are **shaped by-yet also shape-** the institutions of modernity. The self is not a passive entity, determined by external influences; in forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action, individuals **contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications**’ (Giddens, 1993:1) (My emphasis)

Modernity is characterised by first, institutional reflexivity, secondly the reorganisation of time and space, and thirdly, by disembedding mechanisms. These three define the type of era that we now live in and what Giddens calls high modernity. These are central to the development of the concept of the self and of personality development.

In a global system under modernity there is greater interpenetrating of self - development and social systems including global systems. So in post traditional societies self-identity is reflexively organised, indeed it is...

‘the reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, is place in the context of multiple choices as filtered through abstract systems. In the modern social life, the notion of lifestyle takes on a particular significance. The more tradition loses its hold, and the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and the global, *the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options*’ (Giddens, 1991:5). (My emphasis)

In terms of lifestyle different access to lifestyle choices, for e.g. one of these lifestyle choices may be quite unexpected for young people. As one interviewee said about the choices in lifestyle that he had to make.

*AM I do not find it difficult to compromise or even to put these two together. But there is a difference between Islam and the lifestyle and rules and regulations of this country, actually they are not following the Christian religion. Living in a community like this it is not a problem, because I can buy halal food, I can go to the Mosque, and I can meet more Muslims round here.*



There are also other considerations such as difference, exclusion, and marginalisation, and these are interlaced with the above given lifestyle choices. Indeed, lifestyle for Giddens is

‘decisions taken and courses of action followed under conditions of severe material [not just material, but also cultural and racial constraint]; such lifestyle patterns of more widely diffused forms of behaviour and consumption’ (Giddens, 1991).

It is noted however that these lifestyle choices are only accessible to a small affluent group of people, but in addition to this one can add to this that the same lifestyle choices are not readily available to ethnic and religious minorities whose structural and cultural location, limits their choices, and this is not just economic denial or a form of asceticism.

Under these conditions, people's lives are mediated by a ‘knowledge’ of the world and their situation of the public and private, also think of another concept instead of ‘lives’ below their acknowledgement of their position in it. This knowledge forms part of their **lives**, is constitutive of it, and occurs in all aspects of social life in modernity. Everyone is aware, to some extent, how modernity is affecting their social life, so rather than life being just a linear sequence of events which just happen (as Lefebvre argues that linearity is a condition of masculine experience of life, while women's is cyclical, or repetitive) (Lefebvre, 1971), people are able to construct their own life narrative that is a reflexive form of self identity that is located within their experience and knowledge of their particular situation.

Giddens argues that modernity is equated with industrialisation and in particular the social relations that arise from industrialisation. He argues that there are three characterising features of modernity. They are:

- Social relations because of the ‘widespread use of material power and machinery in production processes.’ Also included are systems of commodification and competition as well as the institutions of surveillance and the industrialisation of war (Giddens, 1991).



- The nation state as a socio-political entity, which is quite distant from the traditional forms of society. In a globalised world the modern state is a reflexively monitored system. Also reflexively monitored are those organisations i.e. 'they regularised control of social relations across indefinite time-space distances'(Giddens, 1991:16). One of the key features of modernity apart from industrialisation and the nation state is the dynamism of social life under modernity.
- The third feature of modern social life or modernity is its dynamism.
- How does this dynamism act? Well there are three features here.
- Separation of time and space. There has always been a method for scaling time in all societies, that is, there have always been concepts of the past, present, and future. But in pre-modern eras time and space were connected *through* the situatedness of place.
- Disembedding of social institutions. The 'lifting out' of social relations from a local context and its re-articulation across time and space. The mechanisms for disembeddedness is a combination of expert systems on one hand and abstract systems on the other, the combination of the two is what Giddens calls symbolic tokens. Expert systems deal in a common technical currency, which is understandable by knowledgeable people all over the world. Central to this is the concept of trust and the psychological security of people. Symbolic tokens are a media of exchange which have standard value, and interchangeable across a range of situations, places and contexts, for example, money.
- Reflexivity of modernity. Here social activity and material relations to nature are under constant revision due to the flow of new knowledge or information. This knowledge is constitutive of modern institutions and reflects the reflexivity of modernity.

Globalisation, how does it work, the local/global aspects of it, what are the mechanisms? It is here I believe this reflexive process that the knowledge of the world for people is mediated through social forces such as religion, which can be explained by the 'intersection of presence and absence, the interlacing of social



events and social relations at a distance with local contextualities'. (Giddens, 1991:21)

Giddens argues that 'the dialectic of the local and global' which is how global events over distance and how local circumstances are affected as such (Giddens, 1991). He argues that everyone is affected by modernity, whether in the developed or the developing world. Specialist information from 'experts' is appropriated by experts and this filters down through various channels of communication to be re-appropriated by lay actors, this is due to the reflexivity of modernity; this is how people are affected by a multitude of abstract systems.

Human experience is mediated through socialisation and the acquisition of language; language as a medium preserves meaning across time/space and distance. The media, books, and text of all sorts all serve to transcend time, space, and distance and is linked to the rise in modern institutions, i.e. the mediation of experience. In modernity however this is characterised by '*the intrusion of distant objects into everyday consciousness*' (Giddens, 1991:27) (my emphasis). Distance reported events, however far and remote 'enter routinely into everyday reality', thus not just representing reality but forming it (Giddens, 1991:27). But what is the link between modernity and personal identity and the public and the private spheres? There are two poles, on one side the local that corresponds to self -identity, and on the other side is the global, which is represented by globalisation, all under the conditions of high modernity.

This is how actors gain reflexive ability in the way actors explain their lives and their position in the world. In other words peoples awareness of themselves, others, and theirs and others life is continuously reflexively monitored. But reflexivity however is not just part of modernity, rather the continuous monitoring of one's actions and life is a part of the 'Muslim way of life'. This applies to both instrumentalists and value rationalists and less to the secularist.

### **Ontological security**

What emerges from the data is a keen sense of personal security is this sense of ontological security. While practical consciousness is 'integral to the reflexive monitoring of action' it is also the 'cognitive and emotional anchor' of ontological



security, which is 'characteristic... in all cultures (Giddens, 1991). But deeper issues that go beyond the everyday, such as existential questions- not only of a 'secular' existence but also questions where the 'non-secular' or religious invades and formulates life for people. But questions relating to this world also invade people's everyday existence 'questions of time, space, continuity and identity' (Giddens, 1991:37). Giddens argues that such questions are likely to be asked by people passing through a period of psychological crisis. This includes people in late adolescent or early twenties; especially since there are immediate external issues which impact on their lives, such as cultural conflict, families, racism, sexism, and religion. Indeed different cultural situations provide a degree of coherence to daily life 'through providing symbolic interpretations of existential questions' (Giddens, 1991:37). It is in time of such crisis that **the primacy of the subjects perceived self-identity** is under strain an example of this is the gender roles of a particular interviewee. She did not have any brothers and felt the need to 'act the role' of a son, for, to give herself an altered status within the family, and to consolidate her own position within her family. She says;

*'Sometimes I try to be the son he [her father] never had. I know that when I was younger I wanted to be the son he never had. I wanted to get the degree, have the well-paid job, status and respect that a son would have. But I realised that I could never be the son he never had. But I still try to do as much as I can'* [or stress such as early adulthood or late adolescents]

This could include people in late adolescence or early adulthood, especially since there are immediate external issues which impact on their lives, such as cultural conflict, families, racism, sexism, and religion. Indeed different situations provide a degree of coherence to daily life 'through providing symbolic interpretations of existential questions' (Giddens, 1991:37). It is a time of such crisis that situational identity is under strain, for instance the gendered situation of a particular interviewee. The female interviewee quoted above did not have any brothers and she felt the need to 'act the role' of a son, for, to give herself an altered status within the family, and to consolidate her own position, i.e. situation, in her family. Here her identity problem is clearly reflexive, her perceived gender role incongruous with what it actually was, but still being constitutive of her identity. It also shows the psychological tension



within her. She also went on to define binary choices to be made, whether eastern or Western, England or Pakistan, English or Urdu. This is more pronounced than in other interviewees who had a greater degree of ontological security.

In summary a separate or independent identity rests on the concept of absence, whether it be absence from the parents as a separate existential entity, the other, the self, distance in time and space as not being part of the self, of reality not being 'out there', separate from the self but rather being constituted by the actor themselves. The formulation of routine within an accepted framework that may be determined by culture, religion, ethnicity, gender, and within this the self being constructed in a sense of these and other elements bring about a sense of ontological security.

How does one achieve a sense of ontological security; one who has their own awareness or explanations that are existential in nature? For instance, questions about the existence and salience of God and religion. One way of securing a sense of ontological security is in the quest for 'faith', whether it is of a cultural form passed down through family social networks, or whether it is through the quest for an authentic faith that is itself grounded in some concept of the 'authentic'. It is, for many young people, that they are undergoing late adolescent and early twenties psychological flux, and is mediated through the experience of the extensional issues such as class, ethnicity, gender, religion etc. Giddens identifies four main type of existential questions, questions which seek answers about the;

1. Nature of existence itself with special to the reference to the infant.
2. The relationship between the external world and human life.
3. The existence of other people.
4. Self-identity.

The issue that is central to my argument is the fourth of Giddens' existential question. For him the identity part of the individual 'presumes reflexive awareness' and here it is worth quoting Giddens at length. (Giddens, 1991:52)

'It is what the individual is conscious of in the term 'self-consciousness'. Self-identity... is not something that is just given, as a result of the continuities of the



individuals action system, but something has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual.’ (Giddens, 1991:52)

He goes further in saying that;

‘It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography. Identity here still presumes continuity across time and space: but self-identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent.’ (Giddens, 1991:52)

For Giddens there are ways to analyse self-identity. The first is with those who have a distorted view of the self through mental disorder(s). A more relevant way is by looking at an ‘external environment full of changes, the person is obsessively preoccupied with apprehension of possible links to his or her existence’ or in the case of my thesis, where one reaches a state of ‘psychological crisis’ at late adolescence or the early twenties or other life changes and the social or extensional flux offered by class, range, gender, ethnicity, religion, etc. Giddens however argues that a ‘normal sense of self-identity is the obverse of these characteristics. A person with a reasonably stable sense of self-identity has a feeling of biographical continuity, which she is able to grasp reflexively, and to a greater or lesser degree, communicate the other people’ (Giddens, 1991:54).

Linked to this, identity is linked not to behaviour as such (but behaviour, or social action in Weberian terms, which is a by product), but rather the *ability ‘to keep a particular identity going’* (Giddens, 1991). Thus the young persons identity constantly absorbs events, whether they are from extensionality or intentionality, (local global, private/public external/internal) hence the reflexivity of self-identity, or as Taylor argues that in order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and where we are going (C. Taylor, 1989). Hence a stable (but changing or developing) self-identity requires a higher degree of ontological security and to locate it within their life-story or biography is a central part of making sense of themselves. The sources of ontological security are varied and largely depend on the ‘type’ or psychological personality of a person. A person who can be ideal typed as an value rationalist such as NH who said that her strength (what I have interpreted as ontological security):



*NH...for it [my strength] came from my own prayers. I can't explain, its just a feeling that I get that there is someone there constantly caring for me. I have never, never at the lowest of times felt alone and when I mean this astounds me that people who I would say are religiously active than I am and they do not understand this love, this feeling that there is someone to look after you. I can't understand why they don't seem to have it...And that comes from Allah.*

Or;

*NR Two things that have helped my religion is one, going to a Catholic school, and being the only Muslim there, which could have made me or broke me, religiously. But it made me. Secondly the Gulf War and Bosnia have strengthened my religion and I think it comes down to your own personality and belief and how strong you are. Some people it might give them doubts. They might think that its too dangerous to go around saying that they're Muslims, but I haven't been brought up like that so it helps me, it's something I'm proud of. It is me. If I break myself into three bits, Bengali, Pakistani, and British, if you take those bits out of me it's like taking out my heart or my liver. Everything I am is more to do with me being a Muslim than me being Pakistani, Bengali, or British. It is more important to me being a Muslim. It has everything to do with how I live my life here. I believe in another world so it all combines to make me.*

Islam here is a site and source of resistance for her. The fact of being a visible and vilified minority serves to strengthen her resolve and confirm her faith as a *jihad* or struggle and her sense of identity and ontological security, the struggle for righteousness and for an authentic way of being. Similarly, for this young man (MA) the global pariah was now Islam, and it is this siege mentality that is seen amongst many of the interviewees.

*MA ...after Rushdie, after the Gulf War, and most of all after the cold war. When the cold war was on more concentration was given to the Russian threat and it was not as they defined an ideological threat. It was a political threat. That threat was the main concentration. Now the world is becoming a polycentric world. It means many countries having similar power. There are no superpowers, of course America has the upper hand, but many countries have nuclear power that is totally*



*destructive. Now the main enemy is gone. Now they will search for the only alternative enemy and that is ideological Islam, this what they call fundamentalism. I call it humanism. So Muslims are rising everywhere to establish Islam, to have a better life to be the slaves of the creator rather than the slaves of human beings.*

The students' interviews have generated two main sources of threat to them, they are first, the popular view of Islam pariah globally and locally, and secondly, the racism and discrimination faced on a daily basis by virtue of them being South Asian- or not white British.

For the interviewees, Islam is a religion that is constantly under attack and vilified not only in the media, but in the popular consciousness as well. This is more than simply Islam being attacked, it strikes at the very core of their religious identity and hence their sense of security of their being.

*SA        The popular concept of Islam and Muslims has always been there, it has been there. Since communism is dead, the only other system that competes with democracy and capitalism is Islam. The thing is that the West sees a mass revival-taking place. People think Iran, Pakistan, Sudan is Islamic states, but they are not. It is a smoke screen to put to the people to keep people thinking on a different track. I'm not being paranoid here I am just trying to state the facts... The Rushdie affair, he blasphemed the Prophet, he should be tried in an Islamic state or in a court under Islam. There is no such thing as Imam Khomeini or anybody else. They have no business on giving this fatwa on him; they have no authority in doing that. I think it was stupid of the Muslims to go around book burning, it is so silly the thing is there are many more books that have blasphemed Islam and the Prophet, they were not burnt.*

This double standard rankles and confirms her idea that Islam is being singled out for special negative attention. When asked why did she think that there was such an outcry from Muslims themselves she replied;

*SA        I don't know, perhaps because he was Muslim. But there are many others so called Muslims who have written books like that, Tasleema Nasreen she is in the same boat as him.*



However, for her, the main problem lies with the government and the media who play a central role in 'directing' the masses to islamophobic behaviour;;

*SA ...as I said before the media is a tool of the government, and it is the only way views can get to the people. So if the government has certain issues or an agenda they will pursue that throughout the media, they will brainwash people in the way that they want to think. So it is so easy for them to do that. The person who thinks for themselves they'd see a different perspective than what is shown to them. For example UN policy in Bosnia you will see a totally different policy to when Iraq invaded Kuwait. It is because they had their interest in Kuwait, oil, and money. They wouldn't have done it otherwise would they? One of the UN spokespeople William [sic] Klaus said that they had no interest in Bosnia that's why they're not doing anything. At least he didn't hide it.*

The theme of Islam and hence their sense of identity and safe existence in the UK being under attack is a recurring theme amongst the students, whatever category they are placed in, i.e. whether secularist, fundamentalist or accommodator. The Gulf War, Rushdie Islam as a replacement for the soviet empire as an enemy, in this case, an enemy within is stated quite clearly here;

*MA I started to analyse the Gulf War, what caused that war and I did try to research to figure out some things. Before Rushdie, there was someone in Bangladesh called Dawood Haider who abused the prophet before, and recently you know Tasleema Nasreen. So these things had a great impact and for example it is our belief it shouldn't be attacked. In the early ages for example in Rushdie's time I used to think that our belief shouldn't be attacked, but who is behind that I never thought about that; who is behind that and who thinks it should be promoted. When I started understanding Islamic politics I understood that these Westerners basically and now recently coming up they are coming in line with these Russian agents to give Islam a bad name. Some of them are paid. But I have studied that this a Western gesture when they use democracy, human rights and freedom of speech, and whenever someone abuses Islam they go and support them in the name of freedom of speech. Tasleema Nasreen attacked the Sharia but in fact in reality it gives more rights to women than what they are describing as no rights to women. So because of that it had a great influence on me and I tried to understand... After Rushdie, after the Gulf*



*War, and most of all after the cold war. When the cold war was on more concentration was given to the Russian threat and it was not as they defined an ideological threat. It was a political threat. That threat was the main concentration. Now the world is becoming a polycentric world. It means many countries having similar power. There are no superpowers, of course America has the upper hand, but many countries have nuclear power that is totally destructive. Now the main enemy is gone. Now they will search for the only alternative enemy and that is ideological Islam, this they call fundamentalism. I call it humanism. So Muslims are rising everywhere to establish Islam, to have a better life to be the slaves of the creator rather than the slaves of human beings.*

This is not simply a contemporary theme, but rather, one that is claimed to have been ongoing for some time:

*AA There is no difference, you can't have any difference and some 50 years ago Kuwait and Iraq were one country, there was no difference. It was the British people who put people into different areas. That oil belongs to everybody in the world, its not an Arab property. It is a natural resource, if we belief in one God, one creator, if we can share the water, the, mountains, the air we breathe in, why can't we share the oil? Now at a time when Islam is being attacked quite a bit you have to unite rather than...so it is more important that you say that you are a Muslim.*

Specifically in terms of the Rushdie affair, the hurt felt was very deep. For this young man he found it difficult to understand why Islam, Muslims and his belief should be attacked;

*AM We are not allowed to criticise someone's religion, if you criticise in a good way that's all right, but hurting somebody and to attack someone's belief that is quite hard to accept. This is what Rushdie did. I think what he did it was not right. What he said in his book was wrong, aisynd he was writing out of his head as a fiction, and it would leave to young generation having a misleading idea, and to those who are not Muslim they would think that their Prophet was like this and he did all this stuff. The Gulf War is nothing to do with Islam. It was to do with petrol, Kuwait was occupied by Iraq, and they tried to get help from the UN. This is what they did. These people were there because of petrol, so nothing to do with Islam.*



*The hurt and feeling of Western hypocrisy is noted. This woman spoke about how the UN or the West was not intervening (yet) in the conflict;*

**NR** *That was a time when there was a conflict. I didn't agree with what Saddam Hussein had done, but that's beside the point. I saw it as a Middle Eastern problem and you look at Bosnia, everyone says that if there was oil there then US and British troops would be in there, and it wouldn't be going on for the fourth year, it wouldn't be happening. So at times like that and with Bosnia you feel that me being British and me being Muslim are not compatible at all so you see...The Gulf War is rather different, because this is ethnic cleansing. I think I am more over Bosnia my religion and me being British are very incompatible.*

This is not just the feeling of Muslims in the UK but is often articulated by the interviewees in this study.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

In this chapter and the last I have shown how Islam is a religion with global reach and significance. Not only is it the second largest faith system but it is, arguably, the new centre of struggle in terms of political and economic power which is replacing the Cold War as an adversary for the West. This global conflict however is also being played out within Western countries such as Britain. However, to characterise the relationship of the Western and secular as a form of new crusade is indicative of the popular perception of Islam in the West. In British terms, with Islam now being the second largest faith system and with a majority of young people who are Muslims being born the question of how the social milieu of Britain affects the sense of self perception of these young Muslims, but also how this brings about particular identity orientated actions amongst them.

In this chapter I have shown that the issue of identity amongst young South Asian Muslim students within the university are affected by supra-national or global events, with them themselves picking out political, social and cultural instances of areas that influence them. However, the basis for this analysis is built upon two strands of theory and method, i.e. the theory of Giddens' globalisation, Weber's rationality, modernity and Islam, and Weber's methodology of ideal types which is used as an orientating device. I started the analysis with a discussion of rationality,



Islam and modernity. Here I showed that the position of being a Muslim within a capitalist state such as Britain is not necessarily entirely incompatible with being a Muslim. Indeed, the historical context that I provided showed how capitalistic development was a feature of various Islamic civilisations, and thus, to be a practicing Muslim within Britain need not necessarily lead to a loss of religion.

The previous chapter examined the local/national factors that influence identity but here, I have shown, how, within the theory of Giddens, it is possible and correct to locate the formation of identity within local and global flows. I have shown how the three categories of students that were constructed in the last chapter deal with issues of religious identity and how, when this identity is under threat, the secularists and fundamentalists deal neatly with the issue at hand, but, that for the majority, i.e. the accommodators, identity is problematic in terms of their relationship to where they see themselves as 'fitting into'. Thus, their state of ontological security is more problematic, under-defined, and weaker than that of the other two groups.

In terms of methodology Ideal types in the study as orientating devices it is argued that 'the 'theoretical descriptions' that ethnographers produce are little different from the descriptions and explanations employed by us in everyday life. What distinctiveness they ought to have concerns not their *theoretical* character but the explicitness and coherence of the models employed, and the rigour of the data collection and analysis on which they are based' (Hammersley, 1992:22). And this is the point, here the role of grounded theory and ideal types is essentially, what I have found here. People in their daily lives do not separate their actions in terms of those that are agency or structurally driven. thus, the ideal type, as an orientating device has allowed the classification, description and analysis of the students in the study. These ideal types of secularists, fundamentalists and accommodators are drawn from the initial analysis of the research questions and then from the interviews themselves. What has been done here in this study is not pure grounded theory or the use of ideal types as hypothesis developing and testing device. Rather that the comparison of students with an ideal type has allowed the examination of the role of identity vis-à-vis their ontological security which is intimately bound to their current position.



## CHAPTER 6 - DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

In the last two chapters I presented the findings from the interviews conducted with the students who took part in the research study. Those chapters examined the data from the interviews and concentrated on two broad areas, the influence of the domestic situations such as family and the role of Islam in their lives; and chapter 4 looked at the social situations that the students were in *outside* the home and reflected the role of modernity, globalisation and how these influence the construction of a religious and ethnic identity.

In this chapter I will be discussing these findings and relating them back to the literature presented in chapter 2. In particular I will show how the construction of a religious and ethnic identity for this group of students is problematic because of their social situation of belonging to a minority ethnic group, what negotiations they have to make in terms of their daily lives and how their identity position is further complicated by cultural flows as a result of globalisation. These are placed in a social context within which the ethnic and religious identities have been formed

First of all I will examine the role of the South Asian Muslim family and the influence and hold they have upon this group. I will then move onto the role that religion plays in their lives and how the students can, with these in mind, be categorised into secularists, fundamentalists and accommodators.

### **South Asian families, community, marriage and relationships**

For the first generation of Muslim migrants the family is the initial point of contact that the young people have with an Asian culture and religion. In this sense, it is the family that provides the buttress against the external or white society. It is the acquired role of the older or first generation to preserve and transmit the history, values, traditions, teachings and customs of not only the immediate family group but also that of the wider community within which they live. The social institution of the family within Asian cultures is central to the maintenance and transmission of ethnicity and religious identity.



From the interviews as we have seen, it is clear that the family plays a central role in the lives of the young people and is important. Having said this, the complexity of the relationships between the family members and the effect it has on the young people is significant. There are a number of rules and regulations that they are subject to, which are not necessarily explicit. What the data showed was that the parents and, to a lesser extent, the wider family and community played an important role in the defining of boundaries of behaviour, what is acceptable and legitimate, and what would not be tolerated. Indeed, many of these restrictions and rules are often couched in religious terms, i.e. that a parent may say that 'in our religion/culture this is or that is not allowed' or that 'it is your duty to listen to your parents in order to be a good Muslim'.

This understanding of the family being at the heart of Islamic society and its role in the maintenance of a stable community is repeatedly restated within the Koran and Hadith. There are a number of prohibitions and duties that maintain the family unit, and the function of this is to preserve family loyalty and the kith and kin networks of community in order to preserve and maintain the distinctive identity that is potentially under threat (Joly, 1987; McDermott & Ahsan, 1980).

However, others have suggested that the family is a site of conflict between the generations (Anwar, 1985). This certainly is the case here. While it is expected that there is intergenerational conflict, the conflict for these young people and Muslims in general takes on a particular significance. It is the young people who are trying to forge a new role for themselves in an uncertain world and the certainties that are held dear to the older generation do not apply to them as their parents' believe that they should. What is particularly poignant here is that the interviewees are all students at the university while their parents on the other hand are mainly undereducated *and* with a self-defined duty to maintain and transmit their customs, values and beliefs. This is not to say that it is simply a conflict between traditionally minded parents and that of their Westernising young. What I have found here is an assumption is prevalent in much of the literature in this area that points to an incompatibility and conflicting relationship between the generations, with the older trying to preserve traditions and the young wanting to rebel and Westernise (Anwar, 1982; J. Taylor, 1976; Watson, 1977). As mentioned, I found the idea of the young being caught in



between the two cultures is far too simplistic, and this is illustrated by Khan, where she states that there is a difference 'between Mirpuri and children is a generation gap... resulting from... background and subsequent experience of different cultures and social change' (Khan, 1977:86)

Therefore, in essence, the observed phenomenon of this intergenerational conflict can be seen in terms of the construction of a boundary between the family and community and the outside or wider British society. Anthias and Davis see ethnicity as a tool for forming boundaries in order to maintain a struggle for resources (Anthias & Davis, 1993). Carter et al see ethnic boundary construction as a way of maintaining culture, tradition and ancestry. It is through the marking out of distinctiveness of an ethnic group by virtue of religion, culture, customs and traditions that identities are maintained (Carter et al., 1999). And in addition to this, the characterisation of intergenerational conflict between the first and second generation between those who wish to maintain a minority culture and those who wish to adopt a new and foreign culture is not borne out by the data here. What my data shows is that this is far too simplistic and falls into the trap trying to explain the culture, religion and ethnicity as incompatible, while ignoring the norms and values of that community. Here I have found that depending upon the category of young person, be they accommodator, secularist or fundamentalist, that their relationship with their parents, family and community is based upon one of their self-constructed identity. For instance, while the secularists may indeed find that their ethnic effacement does indeed cause friction because of a loss of what is seen as 'Asian' or 'Muslim' culture, for the fundamentalists the conflict is one which is based upon a rejection of their parents and communities 'traditional' view of religion which is far removed from what they see as an authentic version of Islam, and which is in reality a politicised and radicalised version of religion.

### **Marriage and relationships**

One of the main areas for concern for the first and second generation is that of relationships and marriage. The two concerns do not always coincide and in fact this is a site of considerable struggle between the two generations. Wilkinson has argued in his study of young Muslims in Rochdale that there is a clear distinction between the perceptions of relationships between the sexes for young men and women and



what their parents perceived as acceptable for them. For instance, some parents he found forbade their daughters from going out to work and going out socially, all in the name of saving them from the 'wicked Western world outside' (Wilkinson, 1988:11). Similarly 'respondents- especially young women quite frequently complained of the extent to which their parents impose restrictions upon their behaviour' (Jacobson, 1998:60). This finding is not borne out in the research here. While there was a slight difference the distinction was not mainly in terms of different perceptions between women and men, but rather in their adherence to a particular form of identity, i.e., whether they are secularists, fundamentalist or accommodator. This was the main line of demarcation.

This is not to say that there was not intergenerational conflict in terms of marriage and relationships in terms of not being allowed out, indeed, this group were students in a mixed university. But rather that the nature of the relationship was dependant on the particular identity position that the young people took. So for instance, those with a fundamentalist outlook were quite clear about the appropriate boundaries of behaviour between the sexes, i.e. there was to be little or no 'free mixing', certainly in terms of interacting socially. However, where the issue of working with members of the opposite sex arose, then there was an acknowledgement that in this country there was no opportunity for proper segregation and thus, as long as the behaviour was on a professional basis, then there was no problem.

The striking thing about the students here was that the data suggested that their parents understood the complexities of being a young Asian Muslim in Britain and what potential problems they could face, both in the domestic and public arena. The parents were, in the main, appreciative of their children's behaviour as being within the bounds of what they expected. However, for the young people who had gone against their parents 'tradition' interpretation of Islam in that the young people held a more politicised and active Islamic identity found that their parents took the opposite view in that they worried over the possibility that they may come home with a 'black Muslim' as opposed to a 'normal Asian Muslim'.

The general impression from the literature indicates that young Asian Muslims find the position of their parents incompatible with their own world view and hence the inevitable conflict which is a result of being caught between the traditional South



Asian Muslim domestic culture and that of the permissive West, and this is particularly restricting for women (Joly, 1987) (Rhodes & Nabi, 1992). This is certainly the case for the accommodators who as I have suggested above have a problematic relationship making compatible their position as a Muslim in Britain and a second generation British-Muslim living in a first generation household. For this group the findings of this research confirm this view. It is this group who have particular problems in coming to terms with their position in Britain as Muslims and that they are still looking for their rightful place. What I mean by this is that they have not fully come to terms with the contradictions in their life of being torn between the traditional culture and that of a secular outlook. One of the sources of the incompatibility is that they, to a degree, subscribe to the view that relationships between the sexes have to be controlled and bound within the rules and regulations not only of Islam (or a traditional South Asian interpretation) but also of South Asians in general. On the other hand there is the pull for a desire for the opportunity and situations to live more liberally and perhaps be more like their secular Muslim peers and their white colleagues in the university. The fact that they have to disguise or hide this tension and the manifestation of this tension from their family (and in some cases, from their Asian friends) is indicative of their dilemma.

Compare the secularists, who have little or no qualms about dating, going out, and 'free mixing'. This is not to say that they do not hide this fact from their families, indeed, they have developed strategies for dealing with potential problems from their families. For instance, separating their home and university lives completely, with no interaction between the two, or acting out explicitly different roles within the home and community and those outside, for example, in terms of dress. This could be seen as deceit on the part of the young people; I would suggest that the problem with this interpretation is that it implies that one or perhaps both of the parties (parents and children) are wrong in their actions. No, it is a case of the young people making an active decision about the type of lives that they wish to lead and using their intelligence and other resources to ensure that they make it as easy for themselves, and their families as possible.



What has been discussed above is not a unique situation. The issues are applicable to other areas such as the young peoples relationship to Islam. This is what I am going to discuss in the next section.

### **Observing the rules of Islam and the importance of Islam**

This section directly examines one of the main questions that is set out in the introductory chapter, i.e. how their degree of religiosity or their relationship to Islam affects their move to one or the other of the ideal types. In terms of religion, it is seen more than just guidance for the young people, indeed, they have repeatedly stated that it is simply, or fundamentally, a 'way of life'. What they mean by this is that Islam is more than just a system of belief to them. It is a complete guide on how to live their lives. For instance, it dictates or proscribes not only formal methods and means of communication with Allah, for example, through prayer, fasting and the Hajj pilgrimage, but also every day concerns which go to the heart of their very existence. Islam for instance constructs boundaries between believers and non-believers right through to how sexual relations may and may not be conducted. It asserts the importance of differential roles and obligations for women and men in terms of their relationship position within the family, it dictates forms of governance at a local and national level, how an interest free economy should be run, it emphasises the role of education *for all* believers, not just men, and it prescribed property and inheritance rights for all Muslims, regardless of gender. It is in essence a 'binding force' (Anwar, 1985) which holds Muslims together in an alien country, a provider of a flag of identity and status. Indeed, the issue of identity is now seen as becoming more than a system of belief to a system of practice and of identity solidarity in the face of overwhelming opposition and hostility. Thus, Pakistani self perception as a religious minority is concurrent with a growing Muslim identity (Shaw, 1994) which is becoming self aware and is organising to challenge their position as a marginalised 'group'.

As Neilsen puts it '...the ideal desire for unity is increasingly finding ways of expressing itself also in practice, both through common organisation and common responses to particular issues for concern. At the same time, however, a new agenda is in the process of being written as young Muslims are beginning to make their



presence felt. This implies changes of ways in which the Muslim identity is expressed as well as in areas of social life...' (Neilsen, 1987:392).

Thus, this new found unity as Neilsen argues was even evident before the Rushdie affair and is symptomatic of the allegiance that Muslims have to the faith under the umbrella of the *ummah* (Islamic community).

The above suggests that Muslim youth have found a new voice within themselves under the banner of Islam, but, unfortunately, my analysis shows that this is too simplistic. Again I argue that the allegiances held by the students is not only multilayered, but that it is a function or consequence of their *type* of religious belief. Belief however is one thing, it is putting Islam or the tenets of Islam (however it is interpreted) into practice that is important, as this is the true test of the strength and assimilation of religion into their identity. For it is not what the students think they should be doing (although this is important) but it was what they practice that is more significant.

It is easier to present the discussion by considering the general pattern of religious observance and practice amongst the students. In order to make sense of the large amount of data from the transcripts, it is analytically expedient to use the three types of secularists, fundamentalists or accommodators as suggested by the research on the practice of religion can be divided into three categories. This is in contrast to other studies (Anwar, 1985; Butler, 1994, 2001; P. Desai, 2000; Jacobson, 1997, 1998) where there is little or no attempt to categorise and characterise their research subjects by *type* of religious activity. This is a problem in these and other studies give an overview of religious practice and observance without reference to how these are practiced and the meaning they have in their lives in terms of identity.

Classification by ideal type allows this, and it is through this method that it is possible to see forms of action types among the students which relate to local situations and national events. Coupling this analysis with Giddens' globalisation it is possible to see how wider influences play an important part. So I will classify the behaviour and action of the students in terms of:

1. Importance of Islam



2. Influence of South Asia, identity and belonging,
3. Maintenance of ethnic and religious identity
4. The role of globalisation

But first there needs to be a discussion of the three types of students

### **Fundamentalists, secularists and accommodators**

I will show that there are a number of features that makes the type discrete and distinctive. The data gathered shows that all of the students in the study professed a belief in Islam. What this means is that they all believed in the oneness of Allah and finality of the prophethood, despite their ‘sectarian’ differences. In addition to this they all agreed that the position of Muslims in the UK was a situation of uncertainty especially in the light of the way that Muslims were conceptualised in the popular imagination and in the media. However, the important point to make here is that they each had distinct characteristics within their relationship to Islam, the UK and their family/community that marks them out as different to each other. In other words they all have different mechanisms of coping, surviving and thriving within this context.

The following tabular representation shows the key identifying features of each type. Five broad areas are used to compare and contrast the features of the three groups.



Table 2 Student action types and characteristics

Student action-type	Relationship to particular social context				
	Importance of Islam in their lives	Practice of religion	Traditional and custom based religion	Belonging and identity Primary identity type based upon	
Fundamentalists n=13	Strong and political activism	High-formalised and integrated into daily lives	Rejection of traditional forms and practice of Islam in South Asia	Based upon religion and belonging to the ummah	A non-sectarian Islam. National identity seen as incompatible with Islam
Secularists n=8	Weak- religion emerges at only issues such as birth, deaths and marriage	Low- centred around major festivals and life events	Acceptance of norms and values of traditional forms and practice of Islam in South Asia	Based upon nationality and acceptance of permanence within the UKK	British-Asian. Religion is relatively unimportant
Accommodators n=19	Problematic- have not worked out the role of religion in their lives	More traditionally based, with amalgamation of tradition and religion and no clear distinction made	Problematic- are aware of politicised Islam but still hold to traditional values as above	Primary acceptance of UK but a greater sense of attachment to parents country of origin	Vacillation between Muslim and British Asian. Not yet worked out primary allegiance

I will now take each of the four social contexts and discuss the three groups.

As has been discussed above Islam plays an ever-present role in the lives of these students and as has been highlighted in chapter two. It has been observed by commentators (Anwar, 1998; Butler, 2001; Jacobson, 1998)that an identity that has



religion as a main component is becoming more evident amongst young Muslims. Here I will look examine role that the Islamic religion plays within their lives and how this relates to their action type.

### **The importance of Islam in their lives**

There is a clear and sharp contrast as to how the three action-types see Islam in their lives and the starkest contrast is between the fundamentalists and the secularists. The fundamentalists had the strongest relationship with Islam, not only in terms of practicing and making it the 'core of their being' as one man put it, but they actively engaged in the strengthening of their ties through religion through learning about Islam and actively promoting Islam as a 'way of life' compared to other Muslims in the study who they saw as having become detached from Islam. During the observation phase of the research and through the interviews it became clear that those who were later classified within the fundamentalist group actively sought to increase their knowledge and improve their practice of Islam through means such as prayer meetings, study groups and through political activism.

Islam for them was, in essence a 'way of life' unlike the accommodators that stated that Islam was not an issue that they dealt with on a daily basis, only occasionally. They attempted to positively engage and make central to their daily lives the rules, traditions and customs of a form of Islam that was more political in nature. This was despite the clear difficulties that they encountered within the university and outside. For instance, the campaign to have a dedicated prayer room close to clean ablution facilities was run by the students' Islamic Society. The campaign and struggle with the university authorities lasted over a year and the Islamic Society was successful in getting their prayer room in the Calcutta House small block. However, having achieved this, there was disquiet amongst the students who used the facilities and especially the washing facilities was that they faced barbed comments from other students when they were performing the ritual ablutions within the toilets. The pre-prayer ablutions of *wadu* is an involved process and involves the washing of hands and arms up to the elbows, the face and ears and then the feet, each three times.



This process of wadu, in front of non-Muslims, especially white students was seen as a source of discomfort and embarrassment, but not for the fundamentalists. They saw it as part of their *jihad* or struggle to perform their religious obligations and this is a reflection of putting themselves into situations that are socially difficult.

For the accommodators this process was much more problematic. This came through clearly in the interviews and through observations. The accommodators were most likely to 'become religious' during the month of Ramadan, where all able Muslims are required to undergo thirty days of fasting. This month is the holiest month for Muslims and there is a greater emphasis on prayer (over and above the five compulsory daily prayers) and *zikr* or religious discussions and actions. So, for the accommodators who did not pray, as a norm, they felt the need to validate their fasting through prayer and the public display of religiosity amongst their Muslim peers that was held communally in the prayer room. However, the process of ablutions was more problematic for them and a small number admitted to wishing to have a 'more private space for ablutions' where they were not likely to encounter non-Muslim students who they may know, and then have to 'explain' their actions to when they met later. The significance of this was that for the accommodators felt a sense of insecurity about the public display of religion.

Another example is that of the type of clothing worn on religious festivals such as Eid. When Eid fell during a weekday in term time the male accommodators dressed in their 'regular' clothing, while women accommodators dressed in their traditional Eid finery. The Fundamentalists however used this as an opportunity to wear traditionally Islamic clothes, while the secularists bypassed this engagement completely and the accommodators agonised over the dilemma of 'to pray and be seen or not pray and feel guilty'.

This dilemma for the accommodators poses a problem in that they, to an extent, wish to be *more Islamic* but that they find it difficult to do so in Britain. If they were in India or Pakistan, then as the culture there is more conducive to religious display and action they would feel more comfortable and may even practice their religion more. The fundamentalists counter to this argument however was clearly that Islam and adherence to Islam is not easy, especially in the West, but that it was their duty to practice and do so with pride. The consequence of the accommodators was that, apart



from religiously significant times of the year, they tended not to practice *and* felt a degree of guilt in not doing so, especially as they were reminded of their obligations on a daily basis by their more religiously minded colleagues.

In the private sphere however, the practice of Islam for the fundamentalist group became problematic. As one woman put it, her family 'were not happy about me wearing the hijab and they felt it was just a phase I was going through'. It is important to note here that the traditional view of Islam for families of South Asia is distinct and different to the more politicised view that this group took. For instance, the culture, customs and traditions of the domestic and community space for South Asian Muslims is one that is based upon the segregation of the sexes before marriage and of parents having a major influence in the choice of marriage partners. The wearing of the hijab could be problematic for the parents in finding a suitable match for their daughter as the hijab is not a generally accepted part of South Asian dress. Similarly while the fundamentalist group will consider choosing a partner who is of any nationality as long as they are Muslim, their parents would prefer them to marry someone who is not only a Muslim, but who belongs to a similar background in terms of being a Punjabi, Gujarati, Sindhi or Sylheti. For the parents this would mean that their children could 'come home with a black or white Muslim'. The fact that they may be a pious and practising Muslim is not the point, the point is that they are not Punjabi or Gujarati. The reason why this occurs is because the mode of practice for young politicised Muslims is by and large incompatible with more 'traditional Asian' way of practicing Islam. Thus there is a clash between how the fundamentalists believe they should be acting and what their parents want them to do.

This is more the case for the accommodators where one young woman talked about her 'Sayed' background. 'He'd have to be a Muslim and he'd have to be a *Sayed*. The reason I didn't mention it is that I try not to mention I'm a Sayed... [they] can be either Sunni or Shiite, but they are direct descendants from the prophet Mohammed. Whereas a Sayed male can marry outside the family, to carry on the name, a Sayed girl cannot because the name will be diminished. Obviously my children would be half Sayed, in blood, but not name. So we must marry Sayeds... my mum would kill me [if I did not marry a Sayed]'.



The secularists on the other hand with regard to the importance of Islam in their lives see it mainly as a backdrop, something which they can pick up when needed. It is useful in defining their identity and a part (minor) of who they are, but not the central part of their identity. This nonchalance is seen here for one secularist: 'I think that religion is like a guide. Some people follow it to the [letter] you know. I think you should do however much you can do. I suppose if you can do everything that is good, but I don't think that you should put people down for not doing it. The only way to persuade people is not to force them. ...If you do study it, it is better to come into religion of your own accord rather than be forced into it.'

He is interpreting Islam liberally, stressing the choice of the individual in choosing when to come to religion, something that is rejected by the fundamentalists. On the other hand the accommodators would find this too loose an interpretation of Islam, even though this is what they practice daily, they feel the guilt and insecurity of not doing what they feel they should.

To summarise, the importance of Islam can be seen in the way that they view their relationship to their families' type of religion and whether they have managed to break from the daily pressure of wanting to practice. In the next section I will examine this issue of practice in more detail with regard to the three groups.

### **The practice of religion in their daily lives**

The previous section looked at what was observed and said by the students in the interviews about their belief in Islam and the importance it had in their lives. In particular I showed how the experience of religion was markedly different for the three groups. However, a key marker of whether religion is important is whether and to what degree they practice Islam on a day-to-day basis. The table above summarises the nature of this religious observance amongst the three groups. The range of practice between the three groups is clear in that the fundamentalists have a greater degree of engagement with religious observance than the other two while the secularists have the least.

On a daily basis Muslims have to practice a number of rituals, the most primary is that of being *pak* or ritually clean. This is to ensure that when Muslims pray that they are bodily clean and this is the primary state in which any formal religious



observance can take place. The next are the five daily prayers. In addition to this there has to be a high level of modesty in dress and decorum in action and interaction with other people. Muslims must also refrain from any illicit (legally or religiously) action such as theft, lying, slander, backbiting inappropriate mixing of the sexes or the consumption of proscribed foods and drink.

In this sense the students were asked whether they practiced Islam on a daily basis and again from the data presented in chapter 3 it is clear that the different groups of students had a different relationship to practicing Islam. Starting with the fundamentalists their practice of religion was highly formalised, ritualised and incorporated in their daily lives. For instance, in order to perform prayer they had to be pak and wearing clean clothes. This meant that in order to remain pak and to be able to pray they must wash, with fresh water, their genitalia or anal region as appropriate. This does not include using only toilet paper (though this is often used to dry themselves with). The assumption is that if you pray then you have to be pak, in research terms was an assumption that was made as it was not appropriate to ask the interviewees whether they washed properly after using the toilet.

For the fundamentalists being pak was a basic requirement and thus the struggle by the Islamic Society to get a prayer room near to women's and men's toilets. The fundamentalists were the driving force in this campaign and, in terms of practice of Islam, they saw this not a privilege but a basic human right, as, without the washing facilities and prayer room they could not perform most important duty of prayer.

However, this degree of integration was not apparent in either the secularists or accommodators. For the accommodators being pak became an issue mainly during the month of Ramadan, because to validate fasting you have to perform or 'offer' prayers, fasting without praying makes the fast redundant. Because this group had the pull of fasting and prayer they needed to engage with the practice of being ritually clean. This became problematic for them as is mentioned above in that they had to perform their ablutions in toilets that were used by non-Muslims. Similarly, the avoidance of food, drink, tobacco etc also became problematic. During the interviews it was suggested that these practices were a 'hassle' and that to perform their religious duties was impractical on a daily basis. If they were at home then they could (though they often did not), but in a public space the practice of religion they felt marked



them out as different and potentially subject to derision and abuse. They thus had a lower sense of ontological security in their confidence to practise what they thought they should be doing, unlike the fundamentalist group who were much more secure in their state of religious being.

This is fundamental to the issue, how confident were the students in practising religion in the public arena? For the secularists this is not really a problem as they are very unlikely to practise in public except at times of festivals, weddings or funerals etc, and even then it is more of a social rather than a religious event. However, the accommodators have to balance what they see as their religious duties and their wish not be placed in difficult circumstances where their religion, ethnicity and hence their identity is on public display. This coupled with the fact that Muslims as being on the receiving end of racism that specifically targets them on the basis of religion leads to an understanding of why they feel this degree of ambivalence towards their faith and the practice its practice.

This issue of ontological security and the role of globalisation in the construction of an ethnic and religious identity will be discussed now in order to show how identity and belonging are inextricably linked with ontological security.

### **Belonging and identity**

In the introductory chapter I suggested that there were a number of boundary processes in operation that affected the identity of the students in this study. In essence, in relation to belonging and identity I have identified the following: the three groups of students' relationship to Islam and the practice of their religion and their relationship to the customs and traditions of their family. In answer the question 'who are you?' and 'where do you come from?' the range of answers was restricted to three main areas. First, was their allegiance and identity stemming from religion, second their religion and national identity and thirdly, their national and local origin.

The dividing line between the three groups was clear. For the fundamentalists religion was their primary source of identity. This is problematic as in response to the questions they consistently argued that their identity was based in Islamic teachings and the traditions of the Koran and Sunnah. They claimed that their and their parents' country of origin was incidental. Belonging to the ummah or the Muslim community



worldwide was most important for them. For them their relationship with other people was defined by their religion first and foremost, the rest is secondary or not relevant as one man put it;

*I am a Muslim, then I am a British Muslim, Bangladeshi Muslim, it doesn't matter I do not want to get into that's second stage which states my nationality, because nationalism I do not accept. First of all I consider myself to be a Muslim, but some people might think that disregard non- Muslims is not right, in my view and of course I am a Muslim and I believe that my belief is superior.*

The primacy of religion in their self-identification is a function of their allegiance to a politicised version of Islam that is distinct from that of their parents'. As Anwar has noted (Anwar, 1979, 1985) the parents' generation have a strong sense of belonging to their country of origin but for the fundamentalists this is not the case. Membership of the ummah and being a Muslim is their primary mode of identification. It is far more relevant than a national identity. The reason for this can be located in the global nature of Islam. For this group their place of birth is not as relevant as religion is in their lives, which is shown in this woman's statement;

*'I don't have a country; I just get out of it whatever I can. I am born here but I am also British by birth, but I am also a Muslim and to me just being a Muslim that's enough.'*

Or;

*'I think it's one of the brilliant things about being a Muslim. You can go anywhere and you would be welcomed. I mean you can go anywhere and the majority of the time you are. I don't think there is anything special about it, and that sums it up.'*

The reason I would suggest is that it is in the nature of Islam to include as many people within the community of believers (ummah) as is possible. This binds Muslims in with a sense of belonging and solidarity that transcends, in theory, national and ethnic boundaries. In this sense, what Islam is displaying is a significant global reach in that it places itself above the national, tribal, ethnic and class barriers: this has become easier for Islam under globalisation. As Giddens puts it 'globalisation



concerns... the interlacing of social events and social relations ‘‘at distance’’ with local contextualities... [There is] an ongoing relation between distancing and the chronic mutability of local circumstances and local engagements’ (Giddens, 1993:21-22). Thus, for this group, i.e. the fundamentalists, the interlacing with social, and presumably political events serves to further the role of Islam in their lives as they see it as being under attack; their duty therefore is to protect and engage in its defence as part of their *raison-d’être*. So, rather than religion disappearing ‘we see all round us the creation of new forms of religious sensibility and spiritual endeavour’ (Giddens, 1993:207).

Religion is much more to this group than an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983) which suggests that a global community is somehow unreal and that adherents are under an illusion of communality. Untrue, for Muslims the ummah is real, real in the sense that they have a basis for understanding and sharing common beliefs with any other Muslim around the world, hence the emphasis on a person ‘being a Muslim wherever they come from’.

For the secularists religion is less important than their national identity. Their sense of belonging is tied to their place of birth, their parents’ homeland and their religion, which one of these takes precedence is variable and fluid;

*Because it [Bangladesh] is my homeland, although it is my homeland I feel that I am part of this country. I am confused about this. Although it is my homeland I feel more at ease and comfortable to things here because I can relate to things here than there. When I go there I am a real foreigner, everyone laughs at my accent and, but I really enjoyed it. Because I was born there I would like to check it out, feel that I am a part of it and that I want to live there and find out how it would be to be a part of it. Now that I am here I have experienced two different countries, I want to be there but I will actually end up being here because I have grown up here and I feel part of this country more than Bangladesh although there are all these resentments here and that kind of thing....[But] I am Asian first, depends how they ask. If they say ‘where are you from?’ then I would say that I am Bangladeshi and Bengali, but if they say ‘what are you?’ I would say I am Asian, I wouldn’t say that I am a Muslim.*



She would say that she is a Muslim to another person who she thought was a Muslim or Asian, but not to others. This is not an admission of shame in her religious identity, rather it indicates that it her nation that is the central part of her identity.

In terms of belonging however the secularists are more inclined to place national origin and where they feel more comfortably located in terms of their self; *'I studied in Bengali so I have some feeling for my birthplace so I would say that I am Bengali, then British, British-Bengali.'* This is I suggest is because they have come to a decision about where they feel that they feel more comfortable or more ontologically secure. Living in Britain does not exclude a bi-cultural or hyphenated identity, indeed, it is a form of self-identification that they feel places them within the space London, the university and Britain legitimately, i.e. they have the right to be here. The fundamentalists also feel that they have a right to be here but that does not mean that they wish to remain in a state which is not Muslim in nature. They would argue that it is part of their role to make Britain an Islamic state and if that is not feasible, then to make the social environment conducive and more accommodating to Muslims.

The accommodators however have a more complex relationship to Britain and their place within it. They have not yet decided where they truly belong, hence the pull of Western Britain where they have more social freedom and their parents' homeland which they and/or their parents view in an idealised way.

*My parents kept saying that 'oh Bangladeshi girls are like this and that so brilliant' and I thought oh gosh, girls over there were doing things that I was doing over there, I know why my parents did that because they wanted to hold on so much to their identity and culture and they elaborated this beautiful thing, where everyone is so religious and everything is nice. But, when I went there it wasn't like that.*

To sum up here it is seen from the data that the three groups primary source of identity is clearly defined by their relationship to religion and their national identity. What this means is that the sources from which these students draw their inspiration and notions of their sense of self is inextricably bound with the three



areas of family, religion and nation. The role that globalisation plays in this process is that they are able to reach beyond the national and derive sources of identity that are linked by distance, communality, culture and rearticulate these competing influences into the local sphere and incorporate it into their identity. For instance, the feeling that Islam and they as Muslims are under threat is a source of political activism for the fundamentalists and serves to strengthen their Muslimness. While for the secularists Islamophobia is something that is a source of discomfort, but, they have learnt to ignore or diminish its impact and are more concerned about colour racism, not the cultural racism that is experienced and articulated by the other two set of students.

What remains to be answered are the three questions at the start of this chapter. How the construction of a religious and ethnic is problematic because of being Muslim. Second, to see what negotiations they have to make in their everyday lives, and finally to examine how their identity positions are affected by globalisation.

To answer the first question the data and research show that identity and its construction is problematic for this group of young people due to a number of factors. From the data the most important issues that have emerged for all three sets of students is that of their relationship of belonging to a minority group who are very much in the political and public consciousness. Their religion is a fundamental part of their ethnic identity and if it is their religion that is being attacked and vilified then it is clear that this will affect not only their sense of ontological security, but also how they view their position and status in the UK. The fundamentalist group see this oppression is symptomatic of the conflict that the West is conducting with Islam. They are using their ethnicity and especially their religious component as a resource for maintaining the boundary (Wallman, 1979a) between the Muslim and the kafir (non Muslim) and as a political tool (Mason, 1990b) and resource to fuel this struggle. This is an issue of racism and the struggle against it, the way that this group has coped and thrived is to turn their energies into a political and personal struggle in both the public and private sphere. In the private sphere it is the struggle against the traditional view of religion that is held by their family and community, while in the public sphere it is to assert their



rights and identities. So, as suggested (Rex, 1986), the construction of ethnicity is a political project, and it has manifested itself in a particular form of what I would argue is an assertion of their rights.

For the fundamentalist group their relation to a national identity is by-passed as they do not hold to the location of an identity or allegiance to a particular nation. Islam, as a global religion, subverts this by going over the controls of the nation-state and its institutions. A good example of this is the response to the Rushdie Affair, as a focus for the struggle. The fundamentalists were deeply affected by not only the book 'The Satanic Verses' but more so I suggest by the response against those Muslims who wanted it banned. I would suggest that for this group of young people this was the first key social and political event that allowed them to organise and respond to attacks on them and their religion.

For the secularists the Rushdie Affair and the first Gulf War were significant as they set the social and political environment within which they were becoming politically aware. However, their response in how these events shaped their identity was considerably different. They saw the inherent Islamophobia as something that did not affect them as much as it did the other two groups of students. For the secularists they found that the part of their identity that was under attack was while hurtful did not affect them as deeply. Their response was in the main to distance themselves from their deeply religious peers within the university and to disassociate themselves from the more radical elements. They were content to define their identity as primarily based upon Britain and their parents country of origin, hence the hyphenated identity label of British-Bengali and British-Muslim. Their identity is less problematic than that of the accommodators because they have clearly come to a personal acceptance with their bi-national identity. Islam plays a minor role in this unless they are in a position when they are in direct conflict with people who attack their religion.

But the group for which identity is most problematic in the sense that they feel the pull of religion, tradition and Britain most keenly are the accommodators. For them they have not yet negotiated these three factors and this uncertainty is a source of ontological insecurity. While they accept their place in Britain, they do find that there is a yearning for their parents' homeland; this is manifested by



preference for traditions, customs and the intricacies of South Asian culture. The flow of culture from South Asia is maintained not only through trips 'back home' but through the consumption of culture through music, film and through speaking their parents' mother tongue and using this as a tool to maintain a sense of heritage which they feel that they may lose. The cultural flow and the linking of cultures across vast spaces through the reordering of space allows this group to consume and experience South Asia while not actually being there.

Turning to the second issue of the negotiations that the students make in their everyday life again the three groups show characteristic ways in which they cope and thrive as South Asian Muslims in Britain. Starting with the accommodators it is found here that they display the most resourcefulness is combining their requirement of traditional home cultures and living in secular Britain. However, having said this, they do feel, as noted above, have the weakest degree of ontological security. It is because of this the data suggests that they have to be in a constant state of negotiating what they feel they should be acting as and what they want to act as. This manifests itself in terms of dress, the consumption of halal and haram foods, smoking, alcohol relationships in terms of having boy and girlfriends. They do go against the teachings of Islam and that of their parents but to a variable and inconsistent degree. For instance, while one accommodator does not drink alcohol they may sit in the student union bar with other who are drinking. They may dance at a nightclub but would not go back to 'someone's place'. They take what they feel they can with, and, in some way, what they can get away with, in terms of their family and with God. This negotiation is a prime source of insecurity and hence the weak sense of ontological security. Globalisation makes this more difficult: they are in constant contact with South Asian culture and a global Islam. It is a constant reminder of their precarious position in relation to first their religion and home culture, secondly, their relationship to Islam, and thirdly, the political and social uncertainty following the Rushdie Affair.

The fundamentalists in sharp contrast construct their mode of negotiations within the confines of the rules and regulations of Islam. They tend not to go against Islam but they do go against the wishes of their family who usually find



their hijabs, beards and Islamic dress as going against their traditional culture. However, it is in the public arena that their decision to 'live out Islam as a way of life' as one student put it requires that they find that their decision challenged. But, from what they have indicated in interviews and also through observation by the researcher they are quite strict in adhering to the rules of Islam. This is especially so within the confines of the university. They form a separate group and associate with each other, distancing themselves from white students and the secularists while seeing the accommodators as prime recruitment material. It is through a degree of separatism from those outside their group and through collective actions that they find a community to which they can belong. Thus, even though they are in a secular institution, while they act as a group, the negotiations and compromises they may have to make are limited. It is outside on the street where they come across verbal and sometimes physical abuse as a result of their dress or other marker of being a Muslim. Being spat at or being called an 'Asian nun' or having 'Rushdie' shouted at them is something that they deal with and I would argue that this further their strength of purpose in keeping with their chosen religious path. It goes to confirm their feeling that there is specific racism against them because they are a Muslim and that they are practising Muslims.

The negotiations of the secularists on a daily basis are less complicated and problematic than the other two. For them they have decided that they want to live their lives as areligiously and they have little qualms about undergoing ethnic effacement. As suggested above, they return to religious practice at festivals, deaths and marriages, but only on a cosmetic level, they are secure in their feeling that religion is a minor thing in their lives that will emerge periodically.

Finally the role of globalisation. What globalisation as described by Giddens (1991, 1993) allows is for these three groups to have a dynamic and ongoing relationship with their parents' homeland cultures and with a religion that is a minority religion in the UK. The mechanism that allows this is through a process that is described in Chapter 4. To reiterate, time-space distancing, which is a result of communication technologies, facilitates easier and more affordable travel and frequent contact with 'back home' and other young people who are in the same position as them.



It is through the process of globalisation that allows the strengthening of ties to a far away South Asia and thus strengthens their identities as South Asian, Muslims and British, by varying degrees depending upon which group they come from. The key point here is that globalisation facilitates the formation and maintenance of ethnic identities through the means of communication, consumption of goods from overseas and through rapid and affordable travel. So, globalisation is a means through which identity is constructed, not as Turner has said a method by which identities are fractured and disintegrated (Turner, 1994).

What this study shows is that identities are inextricably bound to three main arenas, the home, the nation of origin and religion. This study has applied the methodology of grounded theory and Giddens' globalisation and linked it with how the students have, through negotiations in their daily lives come to identity positions. This goes beyond debates of national and ethnic identity, as described in Chapter 2, by first constructing an examination and explanation of their lives in the university, home and in Britain and then linking this to the idea that to look at this in isolation away from the context of a global Islam and the processes of globalisation is incomplete. This data was achieved by using the methods of grounded theory, which allowed the categorisation of vast amounts of qualitative data and construction of an explanation of the lives of these young people. It is then through the application of Giddens' globalisation theory that I have been able to give a fuller contextual analysis of their social and political situations and the negotiations that they make in everyday life.

In the next chapter I will look at the limitations of the research what further research can be conducted in this area.



## CHAPTER 7 - CONCLUSION

### THE AIMS AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The thesis studied a small group of second generation South Asian Muslim students' concepts of ethnic and religious identity. The method of analysis of the data was the established techniques of theory construction through grounded theory (B Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1970; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1997) and Giddens' theory of globalisation (Giddens, 1991, 1993).

In the first chapter I outlined the three key aims of the thesis, which were:

- How second generation South Asian students perceive their lives and construct their ethnic and religious identity in Britain (how they viewed themselves in social, political context)
- The effect, if any, of an orientation towards 'fundamentalism' or 'secularism' have on their concept of themselves, their ethnicity and identity. (How the study sample was classified and organised in terms of religiosity)
- How current globalisation theories and the processes in the construction of religious, ethnic, and cultural identity, are working on the ground with reference to this particular group. (The role of globalisation in the construction of an ethnic and religious identity)

I applied Giddens' theory of globalisation to show how this group of students' embedded global events within their view of themselves, their ethnic and religious identity, over and beyond that which could be explained by the use of grounded theory methodology. The method or process of this can be traced through the structure of the thesis and this is what I will show in the summary of the chapters and the findings, followed by what I see as my contribution to knowledge and the scope for further research.



## SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

In chapter 1 I set out the main aims of the study and the social, political and historical context of South Asians in Britain. In particular it describes the environment and social milieu of the students. It highlights the 'mood' of young Muslims in the university and also links this to popular views of Islam and Muslims in not only Britain, but across. In particular, I showed the reasons and context of migration to Britain of the study groups' parents and how there were both push and pull factors which were at work here. In addition to this I also showed how the migrants from each country had different methods, means and reasons for coming to Britain.

I showed how, for the young people in the study, Islam was being linked or rejected as a source of identity. I described and explained the new form of religiosity that broke from traditional South Asian versions of Islam that are influenced by the dominant religion of Hinduism in the region.

Moving on from this I needed to set the study within wider sociological and social scientific literature, and this was done in the literature review chapter 2. The key themes were that of the role that 'race' and racism played in their daily lives and for other minorities, how the young South Asian Muslims have certain commonalities such as the adherence to Islam and origins from a common region with a wide and varied but common history. Thus, while it is not possible to claim that they belong to 'one ethnic group' they do have bonds of history, religion and culture which allows them to understand and empathise with each other, whether they are from India, Bangladesh or Pakistan.

However, the complicating factor is the role that nation and national identity play. British national identity, while problematic in itself in terms of who belongs and who does not, in the popular sense serves to exclude those who are not white, and especially Muslims whose 'faces and dress' do not fit. However, Islamophobia is not simply a local (or national) phenomenon. This is where grounded theory as a method of testing, categorising, describing and explaining the lives of the research (which was discussed in chapter 3) participants within Britain was useful. Chapter 4 examines this aspect of their lives, but as mentioned above, it only went so far in



explaining and describing the role that religion, racism, and identity played in their lives. To explain what the students were repeatedly saying about global events and global perceptions of Islam I had to turn to theories which gave the tools for an explanation for transnational cultural and political flows. This is where Giddens became useful. Giddens' globalisation theory was important together with the role that ontological security played in the construction of identity allowed the explanation of the role of religion, politics, and ethnicity in the formation of identity of the research group. However, what Giddens did not provide was the method to investigate this. Here the combination or integration of the methodology of grounded theory and globalisation theory were used. This combination could explain both the local and the global aspect of the politicisation of Islam and its role in the lives of young South Asian Muslims in Britain.

What this combination 'method' found was that there were three clear types of young South Asian Muslim student: secularists, accommodators and fundamentalists. While other studies have shown the range of views of young Muslims, this study shows how their lives and identities are created by their state or degree of ontological security, i.e. how confident, comfortable, stable and secure they feel about living in a white, secular and islamophobic society. This is where 'situation' becomes important as a test of their ontological security. The ontologically secure fundamentalists and secularist have overcome (or may not have had) their insecurities about the lives they have chosen; whereas the accommodators are struggling with this on a daily basis and what they feel and do is a result of a weaker ontological security.

Thus the first data chapter (4) presented the data from the interview transcripts. It looked, in detail, at the context and situations of the lives of the students, especially within the university, family, community and within the confines of Islam. This chapter interpreted and made sense of the data and then organised and categorised the so allowing an explanation of the sociological context, actions and beliefs.

The data shows the range of ideas, concepts, feelings and opinions of the interviewees. Secondly it highlights the range of opinions ranging from those that are deeply religious to those who are, to all intents and purposes, ethnically effaced. In addition to this the data identifies and explains the actions of each 'type' of student, (fundamentalist, secularist or accommodator) interviewee because the categories



show a variation of the kinds of opinions and actions that people say and do. So, for instance, someone may believe that they are deeply spiritual but in practice, they do not pray, while they do fast and become quite religious during the month of Ramadan.

But having said that, to take one person and expect to find complete consistency between what they say and do is, I feel, unrealistic and not born out by the data. The data shows that in most cases is that there is a gulf between what people *want to be* and what they actually do in practice, in the case of the accommodators. So the interviewees, at various points in time, negotiate or manage their identities to fit in with particular situations.

### **The depth of the data**

The interview data, which was drawn from in-depth interviews, shows a number of things. First it shows an openness and honesty about their lives and their opinions. Much of the data drawn was volunteered with the minimum of prompting and is a clear reflection of the difficulties and successes that they have in the negotiation of identity on a daily basis. The data revealed for instance how people believe they have changed over time due to circumstances and situations, how they deal with the change, and where they see themselves as moving to in the future. It also shows the minutiae of particular situations, for example their dealing with haram meat, alcohol, tobacco and other proscribed things. It shows how they may indulge in eating McDonald's hamburgers but they would not drink alcohol or eat pork.

The data details the extent to which individuals are willing to compromise (or not) their particular belief in Islam when faced with different situations. It shows how they are living and accommodating the tensions between the global (ern) and the local (their home cultures) and to what degree they are successful in negotiating an identity that they and their conscience can feel comfortable with.

### **The conclusions that are drawn**

The key conclusions from the thesis are, in answer to the three questions posed in chapter 1 (and reiterated at the beginning of this chapter) are that:



**Question 1**, second generation South Asian Muslims have a complex relationship to identity, both in terms of religion and culture. The fact of being Muslim in Britain has implications and an impact on where they see themselves as having allegiance to and where their loyalties lie. Their identities are drawn from local as well as global sources and what I have shown here is how grounded theory is limited in its scope of trying to answer such questions, but also, how globalisation theory (Giddens') needs to have a method of application to particular situations or groups of people. So, here I have not only classified, explained and described the students' social actions and identities, I have applied Giddens' globalisation and identity theory to a particular group and shown how it is applicable to them; without this the theory lacks a clear method of application.

**Question 2**, orientation of social behaviour towards radical politicised and tradition rejecting (South Asian) Islam amongst some Muslims in the university is a social fact that has had a profound influence on all the young people I interviewed. It affects not only the 'fundamentalists' but also the secularists as they use it as a marker to distinguish what they are not, while for the secularists, it could be a form of Islam that they may reject or not be able to fully take on board. What I mean by this is that the orientation of a particular form of ethnic and religious identity is something that the students are grappling with on a daily basis and that they either might or might not resolve in the future.

**And Question 3**, how does globalisation theory and identity construction work on the ground for this particular group? Well, Islam, as I have shown, is a global religion with true global reach. It transcends the national and articulates itself in local areas amongst particular groups either as an expression through local cultures-as in traditional South Asian forms of Islam, or through a form which is based upon the type of Islam practised in one region of the world and is transported to another, as is militant Arab based Islam.

These three areas are the main points of the original contribution. They identify a research area, identify the relevant literature and show the ways in which Islam is articulated amongst an ethnically similar group. Applying established theories and methods this group and topic area has not been done before.



So to sum up, the thesis has shown how:

- The degree of ontological security of these students is determined by their actions in the situation that the person is in. People behave in new situations according to how secure or confident or ontologically secure they feel. In second generation South Asian Muslims case they find that in the company of people of their own types they have to act in an appropriately 'Muslim' way and for some while they are in the company of white fellow students, then they have to act in a particular way. So the social context dictates to an extent the influence of agency in a particular situation
- A distinction between local (South Asian culture/home) and global (ern) values. The interviewees themselves make the distinction between the two spheres. There are different rules and expectations of behaviour in each sphere and they behave according to what the situation requires and how comfortable they feel. What the data shows is that depending upon their orientation to fundamentalism, secularism on accommodation, they make a conscious decision in the way to act, so for instance, at home they would not swear/drink/smoke while they may feel more free to indulge themselves outside the home. The choices made are mediated by their degree of religiosity and strength of their particular type of identity.
- The accommodation and negotiation between the global and the local. The whole idea of them acting in different ways in different situations for accommodators and secularists is not exclusive to South Asian Muslims. On the contrary, most people adapt themselves to their particular situation. However, for this group, and other minority groups the poignancy of their different backgrounds and rules of behaviour are highlighted more clearly than for white- British people of a similar age. Therefore, the negotiation is, as Giddens would argue, a symptom of reflexively monitored action, which is dependant upon the position in time and space, or to be more precise, whether they are at home or in public.
- The certainty and the security of their current identity position. One of the features that the data highlights is that they act according to the level of security that they feel. The phrase ontological security is a reflection of the degree of



comfort that they feel, for instance, while sitting in the university canteen with white colleagues compared to when they are in an exclusively Muslim environment. Their identity position is contingent on whether they feel threatened or at ease. The question arises is, who do they identify most strongly with? For some this is among non-Muslims, while for others the very fact of being in the company of non-Muslims is a source of tension and concern. Thus they are shown to behave in particular ways according to what they feel.

- The recognition that this may change as they get older/married/have children. The interviewees are aware that they will probably change as they get older and meet with life defining situations such as marriage, children, death of parents etc. Many of them see themselves as becoming more religious as they get older while looking to return 'home' at some point in the future. This for many, they recognise is a distant dream, as it was for their parents and that this 'myth of return' is precisely that, a myth.
- Relationships with non-Asian Muslims. Finally, their relationships with non-Muslims are dependent on the above themes. Their identity is a function of their accommodation and negotiation of the conflicting tensions between the local and the global. Their strength of identity, therefore confidence in themselves as Muslim South Asians in Britain and their current identity position is only a transitory phase in their personal and social development. With all these in mind they are involved in a continuous reflexive monitoring of their situation and identity position which allows them to act, behave and make choices about what kind of relationship they have with the outside world.

## **REFLECTIONS AND LIMITATION AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDY**

This research has developed and broadened in scope as it progressed. What I think the main limitations here were;

1. I could not recruit more people to interview. Had I done this I have found even more 'types' of students reached 'theoretical saturation' or at the very least, made the category types more robust by providing more evidence and



experiences. In addition to this I was not able to 'follow' the students after they left the university, this would have allowed the verification of the data and explanations of identity that I have put forward.

2. Since the research was carried out, the political and social situation of Muslims in Britain has taken a turn for the worse, with anti-Muslim feeling and actions being more common place. It would have been interesting to carry out the interviews with the same students after the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York (2001) and after the second Gulf War (2003). It would also have been useful to see how attitudes for a similar group of students, post 2001 are coping with being Muslim and 'Asian' in London today. Also this study could also be replicated in other areas in Britain to see if similar results arose or whether there were 'local' factors at play, thus providing partial verification of the theory and method used.

Finally, I think there are three main areas where this research can be extended. First, I think that there is a need to study those second generation South Asian Muslims who have lived in India, Pakistan or Bangladesh i.e. whose parents had moved over to Asia and then returned. There are a growing number of such families, especially those who left at the height of the power of the National Front just before the 1979 General Election. Many have now returned due to economic, educational or other reasons; their experiences of identity would be an interesting contribution to the debate of identity. The second area is that of the issue of gender. In this thesis I have not really applied any of the feminist theories to explain the gendered nature of ethnic identity. This is an important area that needs further investigation. Finally is the issue of sexuality. Despite the denial of Muslims there is a thriving gay & lesbian South Asian Muslim community. They remain hidden from researchers and I feel would have a valuable contribution to the issue not only regarding identity, but to show that South Asian Muslims have similar issues to other people in the UK, as well as differences.



## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1

#### Letter to the Director of planning management Information

Dr Barry Wiseall,

Director of Planning Management Information,

London Guildhall University.

Dear Dr Wiseall,

I am conducting research for a Ph.D. at the London Guildhall University. The University is funding the research through a studentship. The main aim of the research is to investigate the attitudes of South Asian Muslim students in the University to culture, religion and their conceptualisation of ethnicity.

In order to investigate this area I will need to gather data from the students themselves through a short screening survey and in-depth interviews. The problem however is of 'access' to the students. Trying to 'catch' students in the coffee lounge is not acceptable for a Ph.D. I therefore will need to use a more sophisticated technique of acquiring my research subjects.

What I require is a list of students and their addressees who are of both South Asian origin and Muslim. The ethnic groups that I am looking for specifically are: Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, Asian Other, Black, and Black Other (Application Form ethnic codes 29, 33, 31, 32, 39). I am interested only in those students that are studying for a CAS Degree.

From the list I will contact students and ask them to take part in a screening survey from which I intend to draw a sample of students to conduct a follow up interview. The data that I wish to look at is the ethnic classifications that have been marked on student enrolment forms.



The students will in no way be identifiable as individuals to anyone but myself. Once the interviews are completed, I intend to destroy any link between individual students and the interview data. In other words complete anonymity is guaranteed. The data will only be used for this bona fide research project and the results will be available for anyone to see as is usually the case with a completed Ph.D. thesis.

There are a number of ethical considerations here, the main one being that of informed consent. I intend to inform the students what I am researching and how, and how they can see the results of the completed thesis. There is no deceit involved at any stage and the data gathered will not be passed on to any other agency, inside or outside the university.

I will only use the students' names and addresses for the purposes of the above research project and I will guarantee complete confidentiality and anonymity of the records supplied to me.

Yours sincerely,

**Nadeem Hai** (Research student, ext 1044)

Supervisor, Dr Sam Whimster (extension 1057.)



## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Letter to the university records department**

The research that I am conducting is for a Ph.D. at the London Guildhall University. The University is also funding the research through a studentship. The main aim of the research is to investigate the attitudes of South Asian Muslim students in the University to culture, religion and their conceptualisation of ethnicity.

In order to investigate this area I will need to gather data from the students themselves through a short survey and in-depth interviews. The problem however is of 'access' to the students. Trying to 'catch' students in the coffee lounge potentially damaging to the research. I therefore will need to use a more sophisticated technique of acquiring my research subjects.

This raises a number of serious issues. What I need is to compile a list of students who are of both South Asian origin and who are Muslims. The university holds records of student's ethnicity, and I would like to have access to these records in order to draw a sample in order to interview. This does not necessarily mean a computer list.

The list will be used to contact students and ask them to take part. The students will in no way be identifiable as individuals to anyone but myself. Once the interviews are completed, I intend to destroy any link between individual students and the interview data. In other words complete anonymity is guaranteed. The data will only be used for this bona fide research project and the results will be available for anyone to see as is usually the case with a completed Ph.D. thesis.

There are a number of ethical considerations here, the main one being that of informed consent. I intend to inform the students what I am researching and how, and how they can see the results of the completed thesis. There is no deceit involved at any stage.

I am asking for access to university records for the purpose of conducting this research projects and guarantee complete confidentiality and anonymity.



### APPENDIX 3

**Anonymous letter to students that was enclosed with the questionnaire sent by the records dept.**

Nadeem Hai, Department of Sociology, 0171-320 1056.

Dear Student,

I am a Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology. I am researching the attitudes to culture, religion and identity of second-generation South Asian Muslim students. In order to investigate these issues I am conducting a brief survey.

I would very much appreciate it if you would agree to take part in the research. You will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire. Of course, data from the questionnaire is completely confidential and I will use it for research purposes only. The data will not identify you in any way whatsoever either to the university or to any other agency.

In addition to the questionnaire I will need to interview students in order to investigate in more depth the issues raised. I am interested to know if you would like to be interviewed. The interview will last about one hour and will take place within the university. It will, of course, be confidential.

Could you *please* return the enclosed questionnaire (and indicate on the attached sheet whether you would like to be interviewed) by ***Thursday the 30th of March***, as this will be a great help to me in my research?

I look forward to hearing from you soon, and I thank you for your co-operation.

Nadeem Hai. 9/3/95



**APPENDIX 4**

**Consent form sent to student with the questionnaire.**

To Nadeem Hai, Department of Sociology,

London Guildhall University,

Old Castle St.

E1 7NT.

0171 320 1056

Please tick one or two of the following.

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| I agree to complete the questionnaire                    | { | } |
| I agree to complete the questionnaire and                | { | } |
| I have no objection to being interviewed at a later date | { | } |
| I am sorry but I am unable to complete the questionnaire | { | } |

Name.....

Course.....

Address.....

.....

.....

.....

Phone No.....



## **APPENDIX 5**

### **Letter to students inviting them to an interview**

Dear Student,

I was pleased to receive your completed questionnaire, and thank you for taking the time to fill it in and return it.

You have indicated on the questionnaire that you would like to take part in the study that I am conducting. Let me explain what this would involve for you. I am conducting interviews with students individually. This will last at most one hour. It will be tape recorded so that I can transcribe the interview at a later date. The interview will take place at the University in a room in Calcutta House.

I will be asking you questions and letting you talk about issues of how you feel about, identity, living in Britain, culture, Islam, the family and other related topics.

Now I understand that exams are looming, and so to accommodate the pressure of time that you are now doubt feeling I will contact you by phone (if you have given me your number) to arrange a time which is convenient to you. This could be after one of your lectures on any day.

As I have said before the interview is confidential, and no one else will be able to connect your name to the interview. In short complete anonymity is guaranteed.

I look forward to talking to you or hearing from you. You can contact me at the university on 0171 320 1056 if you are phoning from outside. If you phone me from inside the university my extension number is 1056. Please do not hesitate to call me if you need more information about the nature of the interview.

Nadeem Hai



## **APPENDIX 6**

### **Screening Survey**

The purpose of the survey is to screen students from a population of students of South Asian origin. There are students in the university who are of South Asian parentage and are Muslim, and the purpose of this survey is to identify these students as opposed to students whose parents are from the Indian Sub-Continent but of for instance are Hindu.

The questions start with general biographical information and then lead into brief but probing questions on the socio-economic, cultural, geographical, and religious background of the family. It then leads into detailed questions about the religious background and practice of the interviewee's family and of the interviewee themselves.

Many of the questions in the section are constructed to probe the degree of religious practice. The questions about religion enquire about the most fundamental beliefs and practices of a Muslim; questions such as those about prayer and fasting for instance. It will therefore capture those with strong religious convictions and those little or no belief.

I intend to complete the survey itself by 'face to face' interview and by post. There are several reasons for this. Briefly the reasons for choosing this method are (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992:234).



<u>Criterion</u>	<u>Face-to-face Interview</u>
Cost	High
Response rate	High
Control of interview situation	High
Applicability to dispersed population (geographical)	Moderate
Application to heterogeneous population	High
Collection of detailed information	High
Speed	Low

The above criteria are purely of a logistical nature. The theoretical issues behind the survey are as I have said above are for purposes of screening and operationalisation (and therefore triangulation with later methodologies).



Questions

General biographical data <sup>20</sup>

1.	Sex.	Female {	}	1
		Male {	}	2
2.	Age	18-20 {	}	1
		21-23 {	}	2
		24-26 {	}	3
		27-29 {	}	4
		30+ {	}	5
		Other {	}	99
3.	Marital Status			
		Single	{ }	1
		Married`	{ }	2
		Separated	{ }	3
		Divorced	{ }	4
		Co-habiting	{ }	5
		Have a Boyfriend	{ }	6
		Have a Girlfriend	{ }	7

<sup>20</sup> This is to provide a background of the student and their family in terms of socio-economics, and the type of are they came from in the sub-continent.



Other	{ }	99
-------	-----	----

4. Who you live with.

At home (with parent/s)	{ }	1
-------------------------	-----	---

Away from home (during term time)	{ }	2
-----------------------------------	-----	---

On your own	{ }	3
-------------	-----	---

With your spouse	{ }	4
------------------	-----	---

With your partner	{ }	5
-------------------	-----	---

Other .....		99
-------------	--	----

5. Source of income. Are you studying on

An LEA grant	{ }	1
--------------	-----	---

Self Financed	{ }	2
---------------	-----	---

Sponsored by an employer	{ }	3
--------------------------	-----	---

Sponsored by a relative	{ }	4
-------------------------	-----	---

Other	{ }	99
-------	-----	----

6. Are you a:

Home student	{ }	1
--------------	-----	---

Overseas	{ }	2
----------	-----	---

7. Where you were born? .....



8. If overseas, since when have you lived in Britain  
 .....
9. What are you studying at the LONDON GUILDHALL UNIVERSITY?  
 .....

**Family Background**

1. Which country does your mother originate from?

India	{        }	1
Pakistan	(        }	2
Bangladesh	{        }	3
Other	.....	99

2. Which country does your father originate from?

India	{        }	1
Pakistan	{        }	2
Bangladesh	{        }	3
Other	.....	99

3. What type of area did your parent/s come from?

	Mother	Father	
Rural (Village)	{        }1	{        }	5
Small town	{        }2	{        }	6
Large town	{        }3	{        }	7
A city	{        }4	{        }	8
Other		{        }	99

4. Can you name the places?



Mother .....

Father .....

5. What is the *combined* income of your family each year?

Under £9,000	{ }	1
9,001-£9,999	{ }	2
10,000-£14,000	{ }	3
£14,001-£18,000	{ }	4
£18,001-£22,000	{ }	5
£22,001-£26,000	{ }	6
£26,001-£30,000	{ }	7
£30,00+	{ }	8
Other	{ }	99

5. What do your parents do for a living? [Please indicate for both parents where applicable]

Mother;

Director	{	}	1				
Manager	{	}	2	Local Government	{	}	8
Self-employed	{	}	3	Professional	{	}	9
Skilled worker trade	{	}	4	Armed forces	{	}	10
Manual worker	{	}	5	Student	{	}	11
Office worker	{	}	6				



Housewife/homemaker	{		}12	
Shop worker	{		}7	Retired { }13
Unemployed	{		}14	
Other	{		}99	

Father;

Director	{		}1	
Manager	{		}2	Local Government { }8
Self-employed	{		}3	Professional { }9
Skilled worker/trade	{		}4	Armed forces { }10
Manual worker	{		}5	Student { }11
Office worker	{		}6	Homemaker { }12
Shop worker	{		}7	Retired { }13
Unemployed	{		}14	
Other	{		}99	

6. When did your parent/s arrive in Britain?

Father;

Before 1960	{		}1
1960-1964	{		}2



1965-1968	{	}3
1969-1972	{	}4
1973-1976	{	}5
1977-1980	{	}6
1981-1984	{	}7
1985-1989	{	}8
1992 or later.	{	}9

Mother;

Before 1960	{	}1
1960-1964	{	}2
1965-1968	{	}3
1969-1972	{	}4
1973-1976	{	}5
1977-1980	{	}6
1981-1984	{	}7
1985-1989	{	}8
1992 or later.	{	}9

**Religion and degree of belief <sup>21</sup>**

7. Do your parents have any religious beliefs?

Yes     {            }1

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<sup>21</sup> This is to probe the religious affiliation of the family and the student.



No { }2

8. If yes are they?

Hindu { }1

Sikh { }2

Muslim { }3

Buddhist { }4

Christian { }5

Jewish { }6

Parsi { }7

Other { }99

Please specify.....

9. If they are Muslims what sect do they belong to?

Sunni { }1

Shiite { }2

Ismaili { }3

Ahmedi { }4

Other { }99

Please specify.....



10. Do you belong to any of these religions?

- Hindu { }1
- Sikh { }2
- Muslim { }3
- Buddhist { }4
- Christian { }5
- Jewish { }6
- Parsi { }7
- Other { }99

Please specify.....

11. If you are a Muslim what sect do you belong to?

- Sunni { }1
- Shiite { }2
- Ismaili { }3
- Aimed { }4
- Other { }99

Please specify.....



12. Are your religious beliefs different to that of your parents?

- Yes { }1
- No { }2
- Don't know { }99

1. The Muslim word '*salaat*' or '*namaaz*' means prayer facing Mecca at different times of the day. When was the last time you performed salaat?

- The last time salaat was due { }1
- Yesterday { }2
- A week ago { }3
- A month ago { }4
- More than one month ago { }5
- More than six months ago { }6
- Never { }7

2. Do you participate in *Jumma* (Friday) prayers? If so how often a month.

- Once a month { }1
- Twice a month { }2
- Thrice a month { }3
- Every Friday { }4

3. Do you pray everyday?



Yes { }1

No { }2

4. How often do you pray everyday?

Once { }1

Twice { }2

Thrice { }3

Four times { }4

Five times { }5

5. Do you perform any other prayers, for example '*Tahhajjud?*' [a prayer performed at night after the late evening prayer]

Yes { }1

No { }2

If yes please specify.  
.....

6. Do you fast in the month of *Ramadan?*

Yes { }1

No { }2

7. If yes, do you fast every year?

Yes { }1



No { }2

8. If yes, how many fasts do you observe.

0-5 { }1

6-10 { }2

11-15 { }3

16-20 { }4

21-25 { }5

26-29 { }6

All { }7

9. How important is your religion to you?

Very important { }1

Important { }2

Not very important { }3

Not important at all { }4

10. Do you take religion into account in your daily life?

Always { }1

Sometimes { }2

Rarely { }3

Never { }4



11. Islam proscribes (forbids) certain foods, for example alcohol, *non-halal (Haram)* meat. Have you ever knowingly consumed any haram food?

Yes { }1

No { }2

12. Do you consider whether a food is haram or halal before you consume it?

Yes, always { }1

Yes, most of the time { }2

Yes, sometimes { }3

No { }4

No, but I do sometimes { }5

13. If you do sometimes or rarely consume haram foods have then would that include the consumption of products from pigs?

Yes { }1

No { }2

14 Do you ever consume haram foods (albeit irregularly) now?

Yes { }1

No { }2



15. How often do you visit the cinema to watch Western films?

- Once a week { }1
- Once a month { }2
- More than once a month { }3
- Less than the above (occasionally) { }4
- I do not visit the cinema anymore { }5
- I have never visited the cinema { }6

2. How often do you listen to Western music?

- Daily { }1
- More than three times a week { }2
- Once a week { }4
- Less than once a week { }5
- Occasionally { }6
- I do not listen to Western music anymore { }7
- I have never listened to Western music { }8



## **APPENDIX 7**

### **Complete Interview 1, 23-YEAR-OLD Female.**

**NH** How old are you?

**SB** I am 23.

**NH** And you've never been married, live at home with your parents. You have not specified a sect, why is that?

**SB** My dad has never really specified his sect because he never really thought that it was important, at the end of the day you're a Muslim. Some times it can alienate you. When I was younger I would say that yes, I am a Shia, some people would be fine, but some people would say, 'oh you're a Shia, you beat yourself'. So you have to go through the whole thing as to why you have to do that. So I say, look, I'm a Muslim. I think its irrelevant what sect you are, at the end of the day you are a Muslim. Especially at a time like this you need to be Muslim OK, you can't say I'm this and that.

**NH** What do mean 'at a time like this'?

**SB** I know at a time like this there are a lot of things going on between Shias and Sunnis. Now at a time when Islam is being attacked quite a bit you have to unite rather than...so it is more important that you say that you are a Muslim. But if they ask I will specify.

**NH** How important is religion to you?

**SB** I think it is quite important but I feel that's because that's the way that I have been brought up, although I am not very strict otherwise I would be wearing a scarf and my parents try to implement it by saying that do Namaaz and read the Koran, at the end of the day its a way of life. I just feel that its important.

**NH** Does it guide you in your daily life, in your everyday actions in what you do or don't do?



**SB** It can do, yes it does. Not always, but at times yes. For instance going out to eat, it has to be halal. Going out with friends, the majority of my friends at Central House are white and at times its 'lets go down to the bar', then I will say that I don't drink, they will say 'but no one is looking, we won't tell anyone'. Stuff like that, I have to tell them that I can't go out raving all night to clubs, its mainly more traditional than religious. But it does affect my life.

**NH** Where are your parents from?

**SB** They are from Gojra, near Faisalabad. My dad was born in India.

**NH** So they are both under 60 and come from small towns villages. They are both self-employed, what do they do?

**SB** My dad has a newsagents.

**NH** When did your parents come?

**SB** My mum came in 1971, my dad was here before that. He established himself here and then went back to Pakistan to get married and brought her over here.

**NH** Tell me about your family.

**SB** What would you like to know?

**NH** What would you like to tell me?

**SB** Well there are 4 of us, all girls, they hoped for a boy so that's why there are 4 of us. But its obviously not in their *Kismet*. I am the oldest, next down is 20, she's married, she had an arranged marriage when she was 16, she went over to Pakistan, and he is my first cousin and she was quite happy with it so my parents said why not, it will take a while for him to come over, so better to get it done sooner. We asked for him to come over but it was rejected, and so we appealed and although it went fairly well we haven't heard as yet so we are unsure. But we are hoping that he will come over so he'll be almost a son to my father because we don't have any brothers so it will be someone to carry on the family business. But just someone there who can be a bit of support, 'cos at the end of the



day girls leave don't they, whoever they marry into they'll go away so there will be nobody at home. The youngest one, she is actually disabled, so a lot of time is spent looking after her 24 hours.

**NH** How old is she?

**SB** She just turned 11. Apart from that my father came over here and did various jobs from being a lift boy at the Savoy, and he's had this job since 1987, he absolutely hates it because the hours are appalling, from 6-8 but its a form of employment. He did work for London Transport for 14 years but got made redundant. Its not really his choice, but he is not under anybody else which he prefers, but they are very long hours. They have always had this dream of going back to Pakistan but that seems really distant now.

**NH** Why now?

**SB** Because Pakistan has really changed, all the problems going on there and I think you have to have quite a bit of money to live at ease and the facilities for disabled children are good here so they probably decided that they were a lot better off in this country. Apart from that...

Mum's quite religious, dad when he gets the time. I think he feels that it is important but he can't pray five times a day because of the hours, he feels at the end of the day to be good, if you can't fulfil the five pillars then keep a clean mind and the intention. He knows what this country is like, he's a lot more opened minded than mum.

**NH** Why do you think that is?

**SB** Just generally he is a very open minded person. Em... I smoke and the first time he caught me...

**NH** You were hiding it from him?

**SB** Oh yes, of course. He was like, you know what this country is like you are going to see stuff.

**NH** How old were you?



**SB** I was at school. He said 'that you know what this country is like and you have to rise above it. Its a bad habit'. That was a long time ago and I'm still smoking.

**NH** Does he smoke?

**SB** No, no he doesn't. He tells me stories when he was younger, he tried it and his father remarried so he was brought up by his older brother and his mum. I think that has helped him, its made him very open minded. He appreciates life a lot more. He takes a lot.

**NH** Takes a lot of what?

**SB** He's very, it takes a lot for him to get really angry, but he feels because we're girls he has no right to get angry with us. It is more the mothers job to keep the girls on line. If he had a son then he would beat him. He would not raise his hand to the girls because we are girls.

**NH** What is it about being a daughter that he can't raise his hand to you?

**SB** I'm not sure, I think that he feels that it is the mothers job to keep the girls in line and help them. Obviously he will not just sit back and let it happen, if he has to then he will say don't you really shouldn't, smoking is a bad habit, and it doesn't look nice for a girl to smoke. He will just talk whereas mum will get hyperactive, 'no you don't do that, its unheard of'. Where as I can question anything with my father I can't question my mother. But I take that due to the way that she has been brought up. They come from the same village but they are so different.

**NH** Are they from the same family?

**SB** No, they were neighbours but are not related. My mother, I suppose like at that time she wore a scarf and was never allowed out and was always doing housework at home and she wasn't educated very well, up to metric, F.A? I don't know what the levels are like but they both had the same education but my dad



seemed more open minded, maybe that the way he was brought up. I'm not sure, I really don't know.

**NH** How much do you think your father misses having a boy?

**SB** I don't think he misses it but he probably thinks that oh if I had a boy he could help me with the shop. I mean there is only so much that we girls can do and I know that sometimes he doesn't like us in the shop. It can be a hassle sometimes, you know, people can be very...lets say flippant at times, brash, and 'em that stops us being there all the time all though we help out as much as we can. He can never leave us completely alone in the shop for more than a couple of hours because obviously if there was any trouble there is only so much a girl can do. I think at those times he wishes he had a boy, but he's not one to sit and brood- 'oh I wish I had a boy', and its not something he can miss because he's never had a son.

**NH** How does that make you feel?

**SB** Sometimes I strive to be like the son he never had. I know that when I was younger I wanted to be the son he never had. I wanted to get the degree, have the well-paid job, status and respect that a son would have. But I realised that I could not be the son he never had. But I still try to do as much as I can.

**NH** Why did your father come here?

**SB** I think it was family problems actually. I'm not sure. I heard my mum and dad talking recently saying that he had to leave the town and came over here. I know he had some cousins and relatives over here so they helped him come over but 'em I'm not sure. Job prospects- I doubt, or maybe his cousins said that we are doing well over here, why don't you come over?

**NH** How do your parents feel about living in Britain?

**SB** It's not that bad. When I was younger we lived in quite a bad area, but the area that we are living in now is fine. I haven't encountered racism for quite a while, well not anything major, nothing really really bad...



**NH** What is something 'major' to you?

**SB** I don't know. some thing blatant in the street. I mean there may be racism indirectly say in college something, but I mean something blatant in the street, I haven't encountered anything like that. Obviously when you're younger at school everybody has it there. Racism wise I think it's been fine. Otherwise I think it has been a bit of a problem. I mean like I think that if I had been brought had been brought up in Pakistan I would be wearing a scarf, I wouldn't be smoking, it would be different. But then again my sister went to Pakistan recently and she told me that she was not expected to wear the scarf and I was quite surprised.

**NH** What do you mean by the scarf, do you mean the *dupatta* or *hijab*?

**SB** Hijab, hijab. Dupatta I feel there is no point because it is supposed to cover your head completely, maybe wearing the dupatta is just respect or that they feel that they have to cover their head in some way I'm not sure, but they are not expected to wear it. Very open-minded broad minded it's very different, but that may be just in the larger cities as opposed to the villages. 'Cos I used to think that of I'll come back to Pakistan and I'll settle there and everything will be fine and everybody would be really in to Islam and it will be a direction and it will be great, but its not. Its not at all.

**NH** What is it?

**SB** Its very different its westernised now.

**NH** Where about are you talking about?

**SB** Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, those places.

**NH** What about where your family come from, Gojra?

**SB** In Gojra again, she was not expected. They said that you must not wear the scarf, and she would ask why.

**NH** Why her in particular?



**SB** Because she was from Britain, and I thought why, why because we're from Britain that we're not expected to wear it. But when they go out they still wear the full *burqua*.

**NH** What do you mean by the full burqua, or the shuttlecock?

**SB** The full veil, where you can't breath and that, the black cloak, and the black scarf on top. My family does and the women in the street do.

**NH** What about relatives in Lahore and Karachi?

**SB** They I think just wear the dupatta on their head or maybe a bit freer, but I don't think they go out much in Karachi at the moment. I think its a lot freer in the large cities.

**NH** What about your family over here, do you have relatives here?

**SB** We have only three families over here and they are my fathers cousins, they are fairly religious. They are more close to my father than my mother, because they are on my fathers' side. They don't get on with my mother because my father was meant to marry their sister, and he never did, and they go on about it till this day we don't seem to be as close as we should. My second cousins we are the only people in this country related to them and yet we only see them maybe three times a year on special occasions like *Moharram*. We had a *khutum* and they came over and they stayed for a very short time and they have children of my age but we do not converse. I would say that we are more closer to family friends that cousins. I take that to be because of this long-standing family thing.

**NH** What about your family friends are they all Asian?

**SB** Oh yeah. We have neighbours but because they are of a different colour there is that sort of language barrier. Not that we can't speak to them its more of -what do you talk about apart from the weather. But yeah they are all Asian, Muslim and Hindu, but mostly Muslim.

**SB** Where do you meet your social contacts?



**NH** Our local *Imam Baragh* is local but most of the people there are *Khoja*, they are Gujarati speaking, Hindu background. But because we don't go that much, only during *Moharram* we don't get a chance to socialise. Apart from that family friends are mainly my sister's friends mainly who we have met through school, they would come over and my mum would say that bring your parents over next time, or we will go and pick them up or drop them home and we'll get to meet the parents, that way we will meet.

**NH** What language do you speak at home?

**SB** Urdu at home.

**NH** Just Urdu or a bit of a mix?

**SB** Actually it is a bit of a mix. Its English, Urdu, and Punjabi, because my parents speak Punjabi to each other, but they detest us speaking Punjabi because its a bit of a rough language. If you have ever heard anyone speak Punjabi its quite a rough language. My mum always speaks Urdu with us, and brought us up speaking Urdu and she said that it was an imperative that we spoke Urdu, because its so rough. But we have picked up from our parents both, but we speak Urdu and Punjabi, and English with everyone. Its a bit of a mixed language.

**NH** Going on to religion what do feel about it, what do you believe in?

**SB** When I was younger, I read the Koran in Arabic, I don't know why I read the Koran, I didn't understand what I was reading but I was told that I had to read it in Arabic. I really had to strive to finish the Koran because it was like, 'oh have you finished the Koran yet, what *Para* are you on?' So when I finished it, it was like 'I have finished the Koran'. But did I understand it? No.

**NH** How old were you when you finished it.

**SB** I was 11, 12, quite young. My parents started making me read it quite young. I used to go to this woman's house, and then we had a *Maulvi* who came over, so we all used to read it so I finished at a young age. I used to fast at a young age. Purely because my mum and dad would do it. I would say 'oh I want to do it as well'.



**NH** So it was an exciting thing to do.

**SB** It was because people at school would say 'oh why are you fasting, the whole day without eating or drinking' and I would say 'oh yeah'. On Eid I would say that's its our Christmas today, really exciting stuff. Again *Moharram* and stuff I would do it because my parents I was there as well and I would carry it on. I never questioned it. Now I am beginning to question. I remember having a conversation with a white boy at Central House and he said that don't you think its a bit of a blind faith. I thought that how can I believe in it if I don't question it. He would say 'why do you do it' and I would say 'I don't know I don't know, you have to'. He'd say 'how do you know there is a God', 'there is', 'but how' 'there is just believe me there is, I know there is'. So you have to question, you must know the answers in order to answer when some one asks.

**NH** Why?

**SB** Because otherwise its a blind faith. People say why am I doing it, oh because my parents do it. You can't say that. You are not a Muslim until you can say; though I was born a Muslim there are many people not born into Islam and they convert and they are probably better Muslims than those who were born Muslims. No I was born a Muslim but that does not mean that I am a Muslim. I must question my faith, say why this why? In order to be a Muslim you must question, you must know, and then you become a Muslim.

**NH** When did this happen, when did this guy start asking you questions?

**SB** This was a couple of months ago at college. They do this sometimes.

**NH** They, who are they?

**SB** Whites, I don't want to sound racist but they say, 'why don't you wear a scarf?' I know this one girl who didn't know I was Muslim they would say 'why do you smoke but you can't do that'

**NH** Do what?



**SB** Like drinking alcohol.

**NH** Do you?

**SB** No. 'Why can you smoke and not drink alcohol, why can you not come to the pub, why can't you stay over?' OK that may be culture or tradition as opposed to religion. Its difficult to explain to them, they can't understand that I can't stay over and I come home when my mum says. They ask 'why am I going to have an arranged marriage, why am I going to be forced to marry someone'. That's a misunderstanding

**NH** Will you?

**SB** No. My parents said to me that if you like some one you are welcome to bring him over or if they find someone. I have *rishte* come round, like family friends, and mum and dad will be like 'what do you think?' but they will never say we like someone we don't care if you don't, you'll marry him.

**NH** So do rishte come round?

**SB** Yeah. The whole idea is rather scary. You have to sell yourself in a way. My mum really dislikes it.

**NH** What do you do?

**SB** I just put on an act. We haven't had that many so because it's only recently that I said to my parents why don't you start looking it may take a while.

**NH** You said yourself?

**SB** I think they wanted to for a long time. They are not looking hard, but if they come round they say why don't you meet and why not have a chance to talk. There was this one man from Balham. I can't remember how we got in touch, I think it was a friend of a friend or maybe they heard something off the radio, Sunrise radio. My mum listens to it all day off of the shop. They heard about this rishta and I think they contacted, or maybe a family friend, anyway, they came over, and he actually wasn't there, and I didn't find out until about half an hour later. Then his sister and his sister-in-law came in with 5 kids, and she started



breast feeding her child, God I mean, its good that they can be so relaxed, but shouldn't there be a certain amount of *pardah* when you go to someone's house. They were really sweet, but I didn't feel that they were very religiously inclined.

**NH** Is that an issue for you?

**SB** Yes, I think it is, I think I need someone very religious minded to help, me, someone who has values, religious values.

**NH** Not someone who drinks?

**SB** It could be anyone, I don't know who's written down in my *kismet*. It could be anyone. Although I am not that religious I do smoke and I have drunk so I think someone who may help me on the path, or someone who is religiously inclined or has the values, not someone totally, you know. Going back to this rishta we found out a couple of days later that although he hadn't seen me, he was very very interested and he needed to marry quick because he was only in the country for a while, so my parents clicked and said that you will not have a visa, you cannot have my daughter as a passport, so that fell through.

**NH** What were you wearing?

**SB** A shalwar Kameez. I normally wear them at home because they are comfortable, but when we have guests I wear them.

**NH** What about at family gatherings, do you wear dresses?

**SB** No, I have always worn shalwar kameez.

**NH** How do your parents feel about you wearing dresses?

**SB** There is no problem, trousers, jeans, dresses, as long as you're covered. But obviously when meeting relatives they would prefer but we don't have to actually.

**NH** Why would they prefer it?



**SB** It probably looks more respectable I think. If everyone else is wearing shalwar kameez, if we turned up in jeans to a wedding or a family gathering, its just, I don't know, we always go in shalwar kameez.

**NH** Do the men wear shalwar kameez, actually no, not all of them. I remember at a cousins wedding they wore tuxedos. Some people did wear shalwar kameezs, I know her dad did, but on the occasions leading up to the wedding I knew that they wore jeans, trousers. On the actual wedding day at the hotel they wore tuxedos.

**NH** What about religion to you, do you pray?

**SB** Sometimes.

**NH** When?

**SB** It depends, sometimes I'll get into the mood and I'll try to pray as much as I can.

**NH** What gets you in the mood?

**SB** Probably my family. My sister, the one whose married, she prays as much as she can, if she's praying then I might join her. Because I don't know the full Namaaz that hinders me. It's the one right at the end where you sit down, I can never remember the full verse.

**NH** I've forgotten as well!

**SB** Really, I've forgotten as well. I only know so much. I knew it when I was younger, but since I've up I haven't given it as much time. So that hinders me. And then my sisters reading it I say can I join in and she says yes, that fine.

**NH** Your sisters read Namaaz? Does she read it regularly?

**SB** She used to read it quite regularly then she lapsed a bit, recently she started reading it again, the married one, she started up gain because she had her exams and they didn't go very well, and she is trying to get her husband over here so mum says that try to read Namaaz as much as you can. But otherwise she used



to read it quite regularly but sometimes when she's got an essay to do, and when you lapse, you stop for a while.

**NH** How do you feel after reading Namaaz, or during or before?

**SB** I feel good.

**NH** What do you feel?

**SB** I just feel good. I just feel that I am a good girl.

**NH** Good girl for whom?

**SB** In God's eyes. But then I've only done one, and when I sit down and think about it I think that 'I've only done one, what about all the others that I have missed. And even though I pray I still smoke.

**NH** Smoking seems a big issue for you.

**SB** It used to be, but only when people say that you're a Muslim yet you smoke.

**NH** Do the men in your family smoke.

**SB** My younger sister who is 16 she smokes, but that probably because of me, at first she was against it, she would hide my cigarettes and she would threaten to tell my mum, but she's actually started herself, probably triggered off by me, being around me.

**NH** Do you feel guilty about smoking?

**SB** 'Em, the only reason I feel guilty is because it does not make my father very happy. If anything it upsets my father so I will never, I will try not to be caught by him. I will not smoke around the house or I will justify I know I am going to be seeing him or if he is coming home I won't smoke. It's something I do outside the house. I go in the back garden or I open the bedroom windows really wide, but dad never comes into my room. He does mind, he says that 'you still smoke don't you' and I say yes. He says 'why do you do it its disgusting you've started and you won't be able to stop.' He did say that my reputation is important,



what he was trying to say was that if someone saw me trying to do something wrong, they will tell everyone else, and then you are marked, like Syeda's daughter and its because we're all girls its easier to be marked.

**NH** How does that make you feel?

**SB** It makes me angry actually, but then I don't have no respect for my cousins. My sister resembles my father and I resemble my mother, so they, I feel they dislike me because of that and they prefer S (younger sister) to me, because of that. I really get angry about that. They can be very disrespectful towards my family. My mum says don't worry about it, and I say to her that why don't you do anything about it, and she says that you don't want to be the same as them. Obviously they will get there comeuppance in front of God. Sometimes my parents are so good to them and they are so blatantly rude, that really makes me hate family, relatives, you know this whole clan thing. You meet up once a year and you feel really awkward because you are from this family. Nobody talks to you because your so and sos daughter, who didn't marry so and so so many years ago and she's still unmarried. Its just ridiculous, it's really horrible.

**NH** You said earlier that religion was important especially now, can you tell me about that.

**SB** At the moment, well its been going on for a while, Islam is being attacked from everywhere. You have to look at these films. If you watch 'Airport' yeah, where some plane's been hijacked, hijackers are always Muslim. Where do they get that from? Its been going on for years. 'True lies' the terrorists they were Muslim why couldn't they have been anything else? There is this thing about fundamentalist Muslims.

**NH** How do you feel about fundamentalists, what do you understand by this?

**SB** Fundamentalists I realise they are trying to get the message across of Islam. It's some of their values that, and the way that they are coming across, for example, have you heard of HT, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, it is a good thing that they are



getting the message across. I don't see it working. It causes conflict it makes people turn against them because of their values.

**NH** What values?

**SB** Do not speak to anyone else except for your Muslim brother or sister. Do not converse with white Christian, Jews or Hindus, because they have no place in heaven, stuff like that. What happens is that it causes people to misunderstand Islam, and all they think that these fundamentalists are racist, prejudiced yeah and they don't actually see the true values of Islam.

**NH** Which are what?

**SB** Islam I feel that it is more a way of life than religion. Its not to make life hard for you, its a religion of ease it helps, its not a problem wearing a hijab, why do people think that she is forced to wear a hijab, she is forced to cover her hair. This marriage with Imran and Jemima, I think good luck to him, obviously it's their business, I do wish them the best of luck. Why do people say 'Jemima you poor thing what have you got yourself into you will have to walk behind your husband, you will have to live in the house, you won't be able to go out, you won't be able to wear this, do this, do that'. You know they have these misconceptions about Islam. She willingly wanted to convert what is the problem with that. Obviously she saw and wanted something out of it.

**NH** Do you think she would have converted if she weren't going to marry him?

**SB** Probably not. Her conversion was brought on by the fact that he's a Muslim; because of their relationship he brought up religion. That's why she learnt so much about it, that's why she was intrigued by it, it interested her because someone was there, a Muslim was there. If he hadn't have been there it would never have come up on the agenda. It is not something she would have considered. Obviously he did help to convert, but if it was not of her choice she is not a Muslim.

**NH** Would a white woman be acceptable if she didn't convert?



**SB** I don't think so. There are a lot of inter-racial relationships in Pakistan, an uncle of mine who has married an Irish woman, she lives there. My uncle has married someone from Norway, she didn't convert.

**NH** But Jemima is from a Jewish family.

**SB** Because she has converted she will be more acceptable I think that if she didn't and the fact that she was Jewish, I wouldn't think so. But saying that they are very open minded in Pakistan. But obviously she would be living in Karachi or Lahore so that wouldn't be too much of a problem. But because she has converted I am sure she will be accepted, but because of her previous religion she might get a little criticism.

**NH** Do you feel religious?

**SB** No, I don't feel religious.

**NH** What do you feel?

**SB** I feel like I'm in the middle, in this transition. I haven't questioned enough, I don't do enough to be a Muslim.

**NH** But are you a Muslim?

**SB** I was born a Muslim. I don't know if I have the right to be called a Muslim. I don't feel I do. I like to say that I am but I can't can I? I don't think I can. The only thing I can say is that I was born a Muslim, I have some Islamic values but I can't say that I'm 100%. But, look, either you are or your not, if you say it like that I don't know.

**NH** Will you always be a Muslim?

**SB** Hope so. I wouldn't want to be another religion, if I can't carry out the Islamic faith , then I can't carry out any other faith. I was born in the Islamic faith, I can't see why I would like to be any other faith and I can't imagine being an atheist.

**NH** So you do believe.



**SB** Yes.

**NH** What if you came home with say a white boyfriend?

**SB** Firstly I would not come home with a white bloke.

**NH** Who would you come home with?

**SB** He'd have to be a Muslim and he'd have to be a *Sayed*. The reason I didn't mention it is that I try not to mention I'm a Sayed.

**NH** What is a Sayed?

**SB** They are, they can be either Sunni or Shia, but they are direct descendants from the prophet Mohammed. Whereas a Sayed male can marry outside the family, to carry on the name, a Sayed girl cannot because the name will be diminished. Obviously my children would be half Sayed, in blood, but not name. So we must marry Sayeds.

**NH** Is this a religious thing?

**SB** Yes.

**NH** So it is separate from being a Muslim

**SB** No, no, you are born a Sayed, yeah, you can't convert to a Sayed, for the girls you should try to marry a Sayed to keep the name going.

**NH** So what's more important, being a Muslim or being a Sayed?

**SB** Obviously being a Muslim, Sayed is something you are born with. It is not something you can carry on, its not that you have to do something different, you are just born.

**NH** Your parents would like you to marry a Sayed?

**SB** My father thinks that he should be a Muslim, my mum would kill me. It would have to be a Sayed.



**NH** So they wouldn't entertain the idea of boyfriends, even if he was a Sayed?

**SB** No.

**NH** And have you had boyfriends, you don't have to answer.

**SB** I have actually, and they don't know about this, no, God no.

**NH** Was there a problem when I phoned up and your mum picked it up?

**NH** It can be a problem with mum. Dad's fine, he realises colleges are mixed and you have to work, but mum says 'well can't you work with a female'? If you are put in a group you can't say that I can't work with you boys because my mum will kill me. In this country you will work with the opposite sex, it shouldn't be a problem.

**NH** So your father is more liberal than your mum. Did they know about your boyfriend, whether the relationship was sexual or not, they would not know?

**SB** No, no.

**NH** You said earlier that Muslims were over the past few years being attacked, are there any events you can think of?

**SB** Maybe its me, my sister has recently been getting into it as well and we just say that. Maybe because it is we are talking about it know, it may not be, it might be because we feel that the end is nigh.

**NH** How nigh?

**SB** This is just on hearsay, that the world is meant to end in the 20th century, but its not something I've read and until I read I refuse to believe it. Maybe because we are more aware of the problems that Islam is facing.

**NH** What are the issues?

**SB** I think I spent a lot more time with my sister.



**NH** What brought it around for your sister?

**SB** Being around other people that can really affect you. During *Ramadan*

I spent a lot of time with at her university because they have a prayer room and with her friends, I became more religiously aware. When I came back to Central House it went completely out of the window.

**NH** What effect did the Gulf war and the Rushdie affair have on you or you family, or Bosnia or Palestine?

**SB** I always remember that my parents were at first with Saddam Hussein, but obviously we can only go by what's on the news, and that may not be objective. Are we getting news from every single corner, or just from the British and American journalists, and then they realised he was killing his own people and abusing his power. My father has a little more to go on because he reads the Daily Jung so he would tell us this is another point of view don't just go by the news. Over Rushdie they wouldn't rant and rave about it, and we assumed that he had done something wrong, but then people asked us, 'have you read the book?'

No

Then how do you know?

I'd say 'a million and one Muslims can't be wrong'

But I would allow the fact that it could have been misinterpreted.

**NH** What do you feel about him personally?

**SB** I think what he did was a mistake and he could have said sorry, he didn't have to bring out a paperback. He kept it going on. He had no respect for this religion, he had no knowledge, he had no right and he should have pulled the book out. I don't think that the *fatwa* was right because Khomeini right because being only a human, did he have the right to judge? I feel that he will get his comeuppance from God. I don't think the Imam had any right to judge him, and say he must die. He did wrong, but can we take his life. Many people don't



question that I have read in the Koran that a life is only taken if someone else's life is taken. But he repented he must be forgiven. Salman Rushdie did not take anyone's life he showed great disrespect towards the religion. May be there could have been some other way. I feel he's got away with it. It gives way for others to disrespect the religion. Nobody has the right to disrespect anybody else's religion but then you have this right of opinion that gets in the way. It's difficult to judge.

**NH** How do you feel about living in Britain, in a non- Muslim, white Western country?

**SB** I think that if you are trying to carry out Islam, the way of life 100% it can be difficult, you will encounter problems, that is one reason why I probably don't wear the hijab, because it will cause problems, job wise, college, people in the street, it can be a problem. It is difficult for somebody else to accept 5 times a day at work, you can't stop and say I've got to pray now, back in a minute. Having to get a mortgage on a house, interest, stuff like that, its haram, but what are you supposed to do? You pay taxes, but you can't put money into the bank and not take the interest, stocks and shares stuff like that. In order to live in this country there is tuff that you must do. It is difficult. So if you're trying to be 100% religious, its difficult in this country. But then is there anywhere that you can carry it out 100%?

**NH** So you are happy in Britain or will you look for somewhere else.

**SB** I think I will look for somewhere else.

**NH** Like where?

**SB** I'm not sure. It is something that I've to look into.

**NH** East, West?

**SB** East. But saying that I feel safer in this country in Britain rather than Pakistan, because of the way of life. All the stuff in Pakistan at the moment, you step on the street and your blown to bits. There is no law in Pakistan at the moment, and if there is, there is a lot of bribery and corruption so I don't think I'd have a very good time in Pakistan, maybe Saudi Arabia. But being brought up in



this country where I can walk the streets fairly securely, and moving to Saudi Arabia where you're in purdah all the time and in the house and women can't drive cars its going to be a different way of life. Although I'd like to experience other areas, but I don't think it would be easy, being been brought up in this country.

**NH** Is there anything that you'd like to say.

**SB** No, I could go on all day, no, that's all.



**Complete Interview 2, Male, 24 Year Old,**

**NH** Your name is M. Abdullah, what do you call yourself?

**MA** Abdullah.

**NH** You are single and you live at home with your parents, where do you live?

**MA** East Ham.

**NH** You have been in Britain since 1990, where were you before that?

**MA** In Bangladesh.

**NH** Where in Bangladesh?

**MA** In Sylhet.

**NH** You say that religion is very important to you and you always take it into consideration. Tell me about your family.

**MA** We have four brothers and one sister, and I have my parents. My brother is self-employed and my mother is a housewife.

**NH** At which number do you come into the family?

**MA** I am the first.

**NH** Tell me about your family, how long have they been here?

**MA** My father has been here since the early sixties, and my mother came with us in early 1990.

**NH** Why was there such a gap?

**MA** Basically my father didn't want to bring us here, although he has been here most of his life but he didn't want us to be Westernised. His values were religious values and culture was important to him as well.



**NH** As well as religion, what's the difference between the two?

**MA** The type of respect, traditional respect between father and son and the types of attitudes basically. For example the TV, normally we don't watch this stuff at home, while if we are back home we watch the TV there is no problem, we had not seen this stuff what we see here, all this garbage and things. Also he wanted me to be educated in Bangladesh. When I entered college I got involved with student politics and everything, and when they saw these fights they said no this is bad we'd better take him there.

**NH** So your family all came over?

**MA** Yes.

**NH** So where do your relatives live?

**MA** They live in Bangladesh.

**NH** What about here?

**MA** Here they live in Aldgate, Manor Park, Luton, and some in Birmingham.

**NH** So you have quite a few relatives, close relatives?

**MA** Yes, for example my aunts from my fathers side live in London, so apart from that not very close, but close in other sense living all around Britain.

**NH** All your brother and sisters are younger than you, are they married?

**MA** No.

**NH** Tell me about your religion.

**MA** Take three or four years back, my religion meant to me just a religion like Christianity like other religions and not valuable in that sense when I had the idea that religion is something like you go to the Mosque and pray and it's something for all the people basically, and this is what my understanding was.



**NH** So you didn't practice?

**MA** No I didn't practice. Sometimes I would say Friday prayer. Eid prayers I never missed, and this sort of stuff. When I was involved in student politics in Bangladesh I was anti Islamic politics, my politics was anti Islamic. I was in a pro Indian secularist party the Awami League, so I was involved in their student body call *Satural League*. But I didn't understand that it was the leadership who, basically it was the theme of the area. If you wanted to be something like a heavy man and you want people to respect you then you have to get involved with those guys basically. In my heart I always had the respect for the Islamic religion, that respect was within the Mosque basically and within the Koran, without trying to understand it. Then when I came into this country in 1990 and then I'd seen the Gulf War and when I learnt English, well I knew English but it wasn't that good, but I had to be educated properly, I did my B.Sc. and all this stuff. Then my interest grew in politics and then started politics, world politics. I started to analyse the Gulf War, what caused that war and I did try to research to figure out some things for example the Cuban missile crisis, and some other cold war stuff. Then I started thinking that these things happening behind them is something else and these things lead me to isn't there any alternative that could be provided, and then when a Muslim says that I don't agree with this and that would accept it. But when I spoke to a non- Muslim, pro-Western, Western, a Christian, or a non-believer, a *kafir*, when he starts attacking me then I stay on the defensive.

**NH** What does he attack?

**MA** When he attacks my Islamic principles, for example the *hijab* and all this stuff. If it's not reality, if its to be practised then why should you follow it? Then I started to study on Islamic politics is there anything, is there any alternative, and I listened to one of the guys, in Bengali, but he is very influential, and very powerful speaker called Dalwar Hussein Sayedi from Bangladesh. He always talked about politics and I ignored him. But one day one of his tapes was at home and lets see what he says. He was saying that the Koran says that do the politics and he was quoting a Koranic verse then I followed that verse and I asked some specialist to deal with it, and when I found out that it means politics then from then onwards my ideas started to change. If the Koran says then I don't doubt Koran.



**NH** Did the Rushdie affair have any impact on you?

**MA** Yes it did. Before Rushdie there was someone in Bangladesh called Dawood Haider who abused the prophet before, and recently you know Tasleema Nasreen. So these things had a great impact and for example it is our belief it shouldn't be attacked. In the early ages for example in Rushdie's time I used to think that our belief shouldn't be attacked, but who is behind that I never thought about that; who is behind that and who thinks it should be promoted. When I started understanding Islamic politics I understood that these Westerns basically and now recently coming up they are coming in line with these Russian agents to give Islam a bad name. Some of them, it is an estimate, some of them are paid, but even if they are not paid. But I have studied that this a Western gesture when they use democracy, human rights and freedom of speech, and whenever someone abuses Islam they go and support them in the name of freedom of speech. If they have enough evidence then go and attack it but they do not have any evidence to suggest that these things are happens. Tasleema Nasreen attacked the *Sharia* but in fact in reality it gives more rights to women than what they are describing as no rights to women. So because of that it had a great influence on me and the I tried to understand it and now I understand politics basically.

**NH** So how do you feel being a Muslim in Britain, does it affect how much you can practice, for example are you able to pray five times a day?

**MA** Of course I find it difficult because of the environment that I live in, but what cracks my mind is that if I was living in Bangladesh then I would have been able to pray five times a day, that wouldn't be a problem. But I wouldn't have been able to raise my voice in favour of Islam, in terms of politics. Here at least I can explain my point of view, there because of the Western influence currently and the in the cold war days the Russian influence to, beers of the Soviet and Western influence there are agents there, those that speak about Islamic politics they should be punished, they should be attacked, this was the flaw, but this is changing slowly. Even the leadership they call them fundamentalist, fanatic, whatever name they want to give, not only that, people I met from Egypt and Turkey they are saying that wearing a hijab is dangerous, having a beard you will



be followed by the government spies in Egypt. A friend of mine he went to Egypt, he had a beard and he had to shave it.

**NH** How do you feel about that?

**MA** It's really pathetic. It is really painful because living in a kafir country like Britain if you have a beard if you talk about politics nobody would attack you, but there, your own people attack you. This is the contradiction and these are the contradictions made by when I study foreign policy, it become clear to me, they create the influence and they try to create, enforce or I should say impose their western values on our people to contradict ourselves and fight.

**NH** Who is doing this?

**MA** All the western countries, for example Britain and America. For example British could be blamed more than Americans because of when India was a colony the education system set up there, there were *madarsah* on one side and there was schools one side, so the classes there. If someone goes to madarsah then they will become a *mullah*, he has nothing to do with politics, he has nothing to do with running the country or teaching people on other matters apart from religious affairs. If someone goes to school or colleges he is to be credited more and he is meant to study Western politics and Western everything he is meant to be like a gangster. So if someone prays he becomes a mullah, this is self-contradictory and it is a fight amongst us.

**NH** Does religion affect your everyday life?

**MA** There are restraints but these are for our own benefit. For example I can't have alcohol, which is bad for you, all the research and scientific evidence shows that it is bad for you. You can't eat pig because it is bad for you.

**NH** So you do not do these. What about relationships with women?

**MA** My religion, if you talk about monogamy and polygamy in terms of our religion it supports monogamy, not polygamy, but certain arguments are there for four marriages, that is a different issue.



**NH** What about outside marriage?

**MA** Extra marital affairs, no of course Islam does not allow that. Whether I do it is a question to be asked, but Islam forbids it, not only for you and me but for the whole society.

**NH** Do you do it?

**MA** No of course I don't do it.

**NH** How does that make you feel not doing it?

**MA** It makes me feel better but I regret because we are not living in an Islamic state where if I did not do it and others did not do it the society would have had a much higher value. In hear many people do it and my not doing it does not give much value and this is the regretting point and I look forward to an Islamic state where every human, in fact Islam teaches people, Islam sees people as human beings, and humanity is the most important then their skin colour, their religion, or their anything.

**NH** So when the time came you would marry a Muslim woman whatever country she came from?

**MA** It does not matter to me at all. But of course I have personal preference by their face or whatever.

**NH** What about colour?

**MA** Colour does not matter to me.

**NH** Where were we?

**MA** We were talking about humanity, whatever s good for you I accept and what is good for society, which is the Islamic principle. Selfishness is the liberal way.

**NH** You do not do things that are forbidden, but do you do things like *sunnat*?



**MA** Yes, following the *sunnat* if you do it it is really good, but if you do not do it then it is not a sin. Do I do it? Some of the things I do some I don't.

**NH** What do you do?

**MA** In terms of Sunnah sometime I pray sunnat, sometimes I don't. But I do not disregard them then I am disregarding my prophet, and that I do not do. I have sympathy for those people who do it.

**NH** You have been here since 1990, what do you consider yourself to be?

**MA** A Muslim. First I consider myself to be a human being, part of humanity, rather than being a domestic animal as Karl Marx defined in sociology.

**NH** OK, but if I ask, 'what are you, you are a....'

**MA** I am a Muslim, then I am a British Muslim, Bangladeshi Muslim, it doesn't matter I do not want to get into that's second stage which states my nationality, because nationalism I do not accept.

**NH** What do you accept?

**MA** Nationalism is the root cause as far as history is concerned all the problems are caused by nationalism, if you look at the first world war caused by Germany which was nationalism, second world war was the same thing, even if you see the current situation is Bosnia and Kashmir and some other places- Palestine, although there are different issues involved I am not denying that, nationalism is the root cause.

**NH** So what flag do you do under, you said nationalism and nationality is not important.

**MA** First of all I consider myself to be a Muslim, but some people might think that disregard non- Muslims is not right, in my view. I am a Muslim but the first thing to be considered as is a human being and a part of the society as a whole. When you define it in that perspective you include all the people around regardless of their colour, regardless of their religion, and of course I am a Muslim



and I believe that my belief is superior and I accepted that challenge and this is a challenge for the rest of humanity. Therefore no disrespect for the non-Muslims.

**NH** What do you think about the *Ummah*?

**MA** What do you mean by that?

**NH** I mean the Muslim brotherhood.

**MA** Of course all Muslims are brothers and this is the unity you are talking about. This is very important to me because Muslims although the non-Muslims claim to be, they do not show any brotherhood. They talk about another political word, fraternity, some of the economists and philosophers use that word, but in fact they try to show that, they don't have unity but they shout for it and save their people wherever they are. While we shout for it but have no unity. One of the most hated things for me is the Muslims disunity.

**NH** What do you think when you see that poster on the wall there, what does it say, I can't read Bengali?

**MA** It says 'to save Bangladesh we fight'. On the bottom line it says 'to get rid of those *fatwas* let's get united.' But I totally agree with that, we should get rid of those so called *fatwas* as defined by some people according to their understanding to promote themselves for political purposes, but it's a minute thing, just to promote themselves basically.

**NH** What do you think of Khomeini's fatwa on Rushdie?

**MA** Khomeini's fatwa on Rushdie personally I would not support that but it had a great impact. The fatwa can be imposed, it's not a matter of imposing, it is a matter of implementing and if the matter is out of hand already then if there was an Islamic state and if the person was living under an Islamic state then they could have been given a fatwa and it should have been implemented according to Islam. Out of an Islamic state they would be asked to be extradited to get those criminals or perpetrators back to the land where he has been accused and then a war could have been declared on them if they were not handed over. Khomeini



could not follow this up, it was not a reality for him. so fatwa shouldn't have been there, but everyone should have opposed it, but it had a great impact.

**NH** What do you feel about your culture, where does your culture come from?

**MA** Ah, that is the problem. Although my father believes most of the cultural stuff...

**NH** What cultural stuff?

**MA** The marriage ceremony, you go to certain things, you do this and that and so many other things, wastage, wastage of food and to show off. Dowries are accepted in Islam but in our culture it is too much, its showing off to others basically. These are the things which are based on our culture, and most of the cultural stuff is based on nationalism and Indian Hinduism, which I totally disagree with that.

**NH** Why?

**MA** For example if we talk about marriage, when we do *haldi* that yellow stuff, then when you throw rice and follow the footsteps its like Indian worshipping which is picked up from there which has nothing to do with Islam. So it is completely wrong. Even some of the words are in Bangladesh, you see the songs and everything is based on Hindu style which should not be there, it is based on Hinduism then Islam, and Islamic culture is totally different. Islam is a complete way of life and a guideline.

**NH** How do you feel about British culture? Do you find an influence on yourself from that?

**MA** Of course. There are many examples in day-to-day life. Being British you have to adapt with it in certain ways. But if it disagrees with Islam you have to try and stay away from it. But for example you are discriminated in British culture. If you work in a firm or an institution and your boss happens to be a woman, then British culture is 'good morning, good afternoon, good evening' and then shakes hands. Islam does not allow you to do that. If you do not do that then



either directly or indirectly you will get penalise for that, you won't get promoted. There is evidence there. So this sort of institutional problem clashes with the culture.

**NH** What about discrimination or racism on the streets?

**MA** That has affected me, but as a trainee politician I do not see street racism as a problem in our society. What I see is institutional racism is the death pain on our neck, which is the greatest of all, and this institutional racism leads to street racism.

**NH** How do you feel you have been treated in college here?

**MA** Relatively well. I have not been discriminated against, but there have been complaints I have received. Some of them are supposed to be true. Institutional racism against teachers and students. Also I do not find that word in the dictionary what I call *religionism*. This is religious racism.

**NH** Tell me more about religionism, is that right?

**MA** . If you forget about the institution, when you are at home you apply for a job. My name is Mohammed Abdullah. Just fill in the application and write my name, and then fill another one with more or less the same details, and put the name John Stevenson. Within three four days Stevenson receives an interview and you wait for weeks and you never receive a reply. That has happened to me. And even not only that I was speaking to a person for about five minutes and she was taking my interview on the phone. She did not understand from Abdullah that I was a Muslim, but in the end she was about to allocate a time that you can do the induction course and then join the company. Then she said that she forgot to ask me for my initial stand for, and I said Mohammed, and then I spoke to her for three minutes and then the voice dramatically changed. The way I was treated before dramatically changed and in the end I was told that she would let me know as soon as possible and I never received a reply from her.

**NH** Is this because of your religion?



**MA** This is straight from the horses' mouth. When I said Mohammed she said 'ah'. It is because I am Muslim that I am being discriminated against. Maybe she was a Jew, I don't know, maybe she was an atheist.

**NH** If you were Hindu would this have happened to you.

**MA** It could have happened because of the cultural difference where the names are different but it tends to happen more with Muslims because they see, they have a stereotype of Muslims which they see at home, the media bashing of Islam, and their stereotype image of Islam that being Islam being a bomb or a terrorist gang and Islam is a political ideology they know that or fundamentalism and it is something to be attacked, it is a threat to them, so when anyone refers to you being a Muslim that means you are a threat to them, so you avoid them.

**NH** So you think that people think that Muslims are a threat?

**MA** Yes. They are called moderate only if they accept western values. For example if you say that religion is good, it's up to you I am being liberal whether I do it or not it doesn't matter, that's OK. But if you accept that Islam is a way of life, if you accept the political concepts, and if you accept the Sharia, that is it, you will be called a fundamentalist whether you have a beard or not. It doesn't matter. It matters as a political concept when the Sharia is introduced people will be living peacefully and that Western Orientalist see it a threat because it completely different from their ideology of liberalism or even their ideology of neo-conservatism or neo-fascism as I call it and even their ideology in the east of communism and their ideology of socialism which is making people slaves of the state for nothing. So that is the threat. Unfortunately they do not teach Islamic politics at the western institutions.

**NH** Only in a few places.

**MA** Yes, but they are not properly trained and they are not even trained Muslims to teach Islamic politics.

**NH** You said that you are a trainee politician, what are you planning to do?



**MA** I don't know. As far my course is concerned I find politics to be the easiest course and I enjoy it. I have plans for the future I will try to help my community. And by no way do I mean any discrimination or racism towards white people because they are part of the community, but try and help them and lead them to anti racism and anti religionism where non white people or people based on merit which should be counted regardless of their colour. So based on merit people can become a director of a company and then these disadvantaged people can be in higher positions which will in turn encourage more people to go into higher positions which will discourage racism and discrimination.

**NH** Do you think that religious racism was more after Rushdie or do you think that it was always there?

**MA** It was always there, but it is on the increase after Rushdie, after the Gulf War, and most of all after the cold war. When the cold war was on more concentration was given to the Russian threat and it was not as they defined an ideological threat. It was a political threat. That threat was the main concentration. Now the world is becoming a polycentric world.

**NH** What's that?

**MA** It means many countries having similar power. There is no superpower, of course America has the upper hand, but many countries have nuclear power which is totally destructive. Now the main enemy is gone. Now they will search for the only alternative enemy and that is ideological Islam. This what they call fundamentalism, I call it humanism. So Muslims are rising everywhere to establish Islam, to have a better life to be the slaves of the creator rather than the slaves of human beings. Because of that it is an ideological threat to them everywhere. In America they pay this Louis Farrakhan or whoever to incite racism and calling himself Muslim, and there is no racism in Islam, everyone knows.

**NH** Do you think that you will go to Bangladesh to live?

**MA** I don't mind, but I would love to live in a country where Islam is implemented, but I have a preference for Bangladesh where I was born and brought up.



**NH** Is there anything you would like to tell me, anything important?

**MA** I think it is very important for people to understand the media, and the media is the talking horse which has bad effect on Muslims. People should not take anything from the media, it has a bad effect. They are giving a bad name. If someone is abusing Islam it is on the news. If anyone abuses Islam intellectually or verbally it is on the news. Even they use Muslims to abuse Islam when it suits them. People get a bad name from that, and intellectuals, CIA or whatever, MI5, MI6 they are there to eliminate Islamic concepts and values from society. Islamic value is just known as backward thinking. But if we see in reality, in this society nudity is becoming a fashion, but it is the backwardness, the forwardness is modest, this backwardness was 1400 years ago, this nudity was three, so this is backward thinking. Forward thinking Islam and Muslims have. Another thing, Muslims should understand that Islam and politics there is no difference, Islam is a completely life guiding system. It is not an ideology as such like communism or capitalism, but much much better because it explains what is the spiritual belief as well as it guides your domestic life, it guides you how to run the state. So it deals with everything, while communism only deals with the economic and political side. It totally denies the spiritualism which is the human natural instinct, they deny it, while in capitalism and liberalism they leave it to individuals, whether they accept it or deny it, it is up to them, but there are no guide lines. While in Islam there is a complete and coded system, they have follow every single path and every single path is guaranteed and all of the stuff is scientifically proven to be good for human beings. That's all I have to say.



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